

Leon Trotsky

THE ONLY
ROAD

LEON TROTSKY
The Only Road

Leon Trotsky

THE ONLY
ROAD

*Translated from the German by Max
Shachtman and B. J. Field*

qp

*Printed for the Communist League of
America (Opposition) by the
Pioneer Publishers in April 1933*

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

Table of Contents

Foreword	7
I. Bonapartism and Fascism	13
II. Bourgeoisie, Petty Bourgeoisie and Proletariat	21
III. Alliance or Struggle Between So- cial Democracy and Fascism	29
IV. Thaelmann's Twenty-One Mistakes	36
V. The Checking of the Stalin-Thael- mann Policy Against Their Own Experience	48
VI. What They Say About the United Front in Prague	55
VII. The Class Struggle in the Light of the Economic Cycle	67
VIII. The Road to Socialism	77
IX. The Only Road	85
Afterword	92

845768

Foreword

THE decline of capitalism promises to be still more stormy, dramatic and bloody than its rise. German capitalism will surely prove no exception. If its agony is being stretched out too long, the fault—we must speak the truth—lies with the parties of the proletariat.

German capitalism appeared late on the scene, and was deprived of the privileges of the first-born. Russia's development placed it somewhere between England and India; Germany, in such a scheme, would have to occupy the place between England and Russia, but without the enormous oversea colonies of Great Britain and without the "internal colonies" of Tsarist Russia. Germany, squeezed into the heart of Europe, was faced—at a time when the whole world had already been divided up—with the necessity of conquering foreign markets and redividing colonies which had already been divided.

German capitalism was not destined to swim with the stream, to give itself up to the free play of forces. Only Great Britain could afford this luxury, and then only for a limited historical period, which has recently been closed before our eyes. German capitalism could not even afford the "sense of moderation" of French capitalism, which is entrenched within its limitations and in addition is equipped with rich colonial possessions as a reserve.

The German bourgeoisie, opportunistic through and through in the domain of internal politics, had to rise to heights of audacity and rapidity in that of economy and of world politics; it had to expand its production immeasurably, to catch up with the older nations, to rattle the sword and hurl itself into the war. The extreme rationalization of German industry after the war likewise resulted from the necessity of overcoming the unfavorable conditions of historical delay, of geographical situation and of military defeat.

If the economic evils of our epoch, in the last analysis, result from the fact that the productive forces of humanity are incompatible with private ownership of the means of production as well as with national boundaries, German capitalism is going through the severest convulsions just because it is the most modern, most advanced and most dynamic capitalism on the continent of Europe.

The physicians of German capitalism are divided into three schools: liberalism, planned economy, and autarchy.

Liberalism would like to restore the "*national laws of the market*". But the wretched political fate of liberalism only reflects the fact that German capitalism could never base itself on Manchesterism, but went through protectionism to trusts and monopolies. German economy cannot be brought back to a "healthy" past which never existed.

"National Socialism" promises to revise the work of Versailles in its own manner, i. e., in fact, to carry further the offensive of Hohenzollern imperialism. At the same time it wanes to bring Germany to *autarchy*, i. e., to the road of provincialism and voluntary restriction. The lion's roar in this case covers the psychology of the whipped dog. To adapt German

capitalism to its national boundaries is about the same as to cure a sick man by cutting off his right hand, his left foot and part of his skull.

To cure capitalism by means of *planned economy* would mean to eliminate competition. In such a case we must begin with the abolition of private ownership of the means of production. The bureaucratic-professorial reformers do not even dare to think of it. German economy is, least of all, purely Germany it is an integral constituent of world economy. A German plan is conceivable only in the perspective of an international economic plan. A planned system within closed national boundaries would mean the abnegation of world economy, i. e., the attempt to retreat to the system of autarchy.

These three systems with their mutual feuds, in reality resemble each other in the respect that they are all shut in within the magic circle of reactionary Utopianism. What must be saved is not German capitalism, but Germany—from its capitalism.

In the years of the crisis, the German bourgeoisie, of its theoreticians at least, have uttered speeches of repentance—yes, they had carried out much too risky policies, they had too lightly resorted to the help of foreign credits, had pushed forward too fast the modernization of factory equipment, etc. In the future one must be more careful! In reality, however, as the Papen program and the attitude of finance-capital toward it have shown, the leaders of the German bourgeoisie incline today more than ever to economic adventurism.

At the first signs of an industrial revival, German capitalism will show itself to be what its historical past has made it, and not what the liberal moralists would like to make it. The entrepreneurs, hungry for profits, will again raise the steam pressure without look-

ing at the pressure gauge. The chase for foreign credits will again take on a feverish character. Are the possibilities of expansion slight? All the more necessary to monopolize them for oneself. The terrified world will again see the picture of the preceding period, but in the form of still more violent convulsions. At the same time, the restoration of German militarism will proceed. As if the years 1914-1918 had never existed. The German bourgeoisie is again placing East Elbe barons at the head of the nation. Under Bonapartist auspices they are even more inclined to risk the head of the nation than under those of the legitimate monarchy.

In their lucid moments the leaders of German Social-Democracy must ask themselves, "By what miracle does their party, after all the damage that it has done, still lead millions of workers?" Certainly, great importance must be given to the conservatism innate in every mass organization. Several generations of the proletariat have gone through Social-Democracy as a political school; this has created a great tradition. Yet that is not the main reason for the vitality of reformism. The workers cannot simply leave the Social-Democracy, in spite of all the crimes of that party; they must be able to replace it by another party. Meanwhile the German Communist Party, in the person of its leaders, has for the past nine years done decidedly everything in its power to repel the masses, or at least prevent them from rallying around the Communist party.

The policy of capitulation of Stalin-Brandler in the year 1923; the ultra-Left zigzag of Maslow-Ruth Fischer-Thaelmann in 1924-5; the opportunistic crawling before the Social-Democracy in 1926-8; the adventurism of the "third period" in 1928-30; the theory and practice of "social Fascism" and of "national lib-

eration" in 1930-2—those are the items of the bill. The total reads: Hindenburg-Papen-Schleicher & Co.*

On the capitalist road, there is no issue for the German people. Therein lies the important source of strength for the Communist party. The example of the Soviet Union shows through experience that there is a way out on the socialist road. Therein lies the second source of strength for the Communist party.

Only—thanks to the conditions of development of the isolated proletarian state, there arrived at the leadership of the Soviet Union a national-opportunistic bureaucracy, which does not believe in the world revolution, which defends its independence of the world revolution and at the same time maintains an unlimited domination over the Communist International. Therein consists at the present time the greatest misfortune for the German and the international proletariat.

The situation in Germany is as if purposely created to make it possible for the Communist party to win the majority of the workers in a short time. Only, the Communist party must understand that as yet, today, it represents the minority of the proletariat, and must firmly tread the road of united front tactics. Instead of this, the Communist party has made its own a tactic which can be expressed in the following words: not to give the German workers the possibility of carrying on economic struggles, or offering resistance to Fascism, or of seizing the weapon of the general strike, or of creating Soviets—before the entire proletariat recognizes in advance the leadership of the Communist party. The political task is converted into an ultimatum.

From where could this destructive method have

*And now, of course, Hitler too. (Trans.)

CHAPTER ONE

Bonapartism and Fascism

LET us endeavor to realize briefly what has occurred and where we stand.

Thanks to the social democracy, the Bruening government had at its disposal the support of parliament for ruling with the aid of emergency decrees. The social democratic leaders said: "In this manner we shall block the road of Fascism to power." The Stalinist bureaucracy said: "No, Fascism has already triumphed, it is the Bruening regime which is Fascism." Both were false. The social democrats palmed off a passive receding before Fascism as the struggle against Fascism. The Stalinists presented the matter as if the victory of Fascism was already behind them. The fighting power of the proletariat was sapped by both sides and the triumph of the enemy facilitated and brought closer.

In its time, we designated the Bruening government as *Bonapartism* ("caricature of Bonapartism"), that is, as a regime of the military-police dictatorship. As soon as the struggle of two social strata—the haves and the have-nots, the exploiter and the exploited—reaches its highest tension, the conditions are given for the domination of bureaucracy, police, soldiery. The government becomes "independent" of society. Let us once more recall: if two forks are stuck symmetrically into a cork, the latter can stand even on the head of a pin. That is precisely the schema of Bonapart-

come? The answer to this is the policy of the Stalinist fraction in the Soviet Union. There the apparatus has converted political leadership into administrative command. In refusing to permit the workers to discuss, or criticize, or vote, the Stalinist bureaucracy speaks to them in no other language than that of the ultimatum. The policy of Thälmann is an attempt to translate Stalinism into bad German. But the difference consists in the fact that the bureaucracy of the U. S. S. R. has at the disposal of its policy of command the State power, which it received at the hands of the October revolution. Thälmann, on the other hand, has, for the reinforcement of his ultimatum, only the formal authority of the Soviet Union. This is a great source of moral assistance, but under the given conditions it suffices only to close the mouths of the Communist workers, but not to win over the social-democratic workers. But this latter task constitutes in fact the problem of the German revolution.

Continuing the former works of the author, devoted to the policy of the German proletariat, the present brochure attempts to investigate the questions of German revolutionary policy in a new stage.
Prinkipo, September 13, 1932.

—L. TROTSKY.

ism. To be sure, such a government does not cease being the clerk of the property-owners. Yet the clerk sits on the back of the boss, rubs his neck raw and does not hesitate at times to dig his boots into his face.

It might have been assumed that Bruening would hold on until the final solution. Yet, in the course of events, another link inserted itself: the Papen government. Were we to be exact, we should have to make a rectification of our old designation: the Bruening government was a pre-Bonapartist government. Bruening was only a precursor. In a perfected form, Bonapartism came upon the scene in the Papen-Schleicher government.

Wherein lies the difference? Bruening asserted that he knew no greater happiness than to "serve" Hindenburg and Paragraph 48. Hitler "supported" Bruening's right hip with his fist. But with the left elbow Bruening rested on Wels' shoulder. In the Reichstag, Bruening found a majority which relieved him of the necessity of reckoning with the Reichstag.

The more Bruening's independence from the parliament grew, the more independent did the summits of the bureaucracy feel themselves from Bruening and the political groupings standing behind him. There only remained finally to break the bonds with the Reichstag. The von Papen government emerged from an immaculate bureaucratic conception. With the right elbow it rests upon Hitler's shoulder. With the police fist it wards off the proletariat on the Left. Therein lies the secret of its "stability", that is, of the fact that it did not collapse at the moment of its birth.

The Bruening government bore a clerical-bureaucratic-police character. The Reichswehr still remained in reserve. Next to the police, the "Iron Front" served as a direct prop of Order. It is precisely in wiping out the dependence on the "Iron Front" that

lay the essence of the Hindenburg-Papen coup d'Etat. The Generals moved up automatically to first place.

The social democratic leaders turned out to be completely duped. And it is no more than proper for them in periods of social crisis. These petty bourgeois intriguers appear to be clever only under those conditions where cleverness is not necessary. Now they pull the covers over their heads at night, sweat and hope for a miracle: Perhaps in the end we may yet be able to save not only our necks but also the overstuffed furniture and the little, innocent savings. But there will be no more miracles. . . .

Unfortunately, however, the Communist party has also been taken completely by surprise by the events. The Stalinist bureaucracy was unable to foresee a thing. Today Thälmann, Remmele and others speak on every occasion of "the coup d'Etat of July 20." How is that? At first they contended that Fascism had already arrived and that only "counter-revolutionary Trotskyists" could speak of it as something in the future. Now it turns out that to pass over from Bruening to Papen—for the present not to Hitler but only to Papen—a whole "coup d'Etat" was necessary. Yet the class content of Severing, Bruening and Hitler, these sages taught us, is "one and the same thing." Then whence and wherefore the coup d'Etat?

But the confusion doesn't come to an end with this. Even though the difference between Bonapartism and Fascism has now been revealed plainly enough, Thälmann, Remmele and others speak of the *Fascist* coup d'Etat of July 20. At the same time, they warn the workers against the approaching danger of the Hitlerist, that is, of the equally Fascist overturn. Finally, the social democracy is designated just as before as social Fascist. The unfolding events are in this way reduced to this, that species of Fascism take the power

from each other with the aid of "Fascist" coups d'Etat. Isn't it clear that the whole Stalinist theory was created only for the purpose of glueing up the human brain?

The less prepared the workers were, the more the appearance of the Papen government on the scene had to arouse the impression of strength: complete ignoring of the parties, new emergency decrees, dissolution of the Reichstag, reprisals, state of seige in the capital, abolition of the Prussian "Democracy". And with what ease! A lion you kill with a shot; the flea you squash between the fingernails; social democratic ministers are finished off with a fillip.

Only, in spite of the appearance of concentrated forces, the Papen government "as such" is weaker yet than its predecessor. The Bonapartist regime can attain a comparatively stable and durable character only in the event that it brings a revolutionary epoch to a close; when the relationship of forces has already been tested in battles; when the revolutionary classes are already spent; while the possessing classes have not yet freed themselves from the fear: will not the morrow bring new convulsions? Without this basic condition, that is, without a preceding exhaustion of the mass energies in battles, the Bonapartist regime is in no position to develop.

Through the Papen government, the barons, the magnates of capital and the bankers have undertaken the attempt to secure their weal by means of the police and the regular army. The idea of giving up all power to Hitler, who supports himself upon the avid and unleashed bands of the petty bourgeoisie, is far from a pleasant one to them. They do not, of course, doubt that in the long run Hitler will be a submissive instrument of their domination. Yet this is bound up with conclusions, with the risk of a long and weary

civil war and great expense. To be sure, Fascism, as the Italian example shows, leads in the end to a militarist-bureaucratic dictatorship of the Bonapartist type. But for that it requires a number of years even in the event of a complete victory: a longer span of years in Germany than in Italy. It is clear that the possessing classes would prefer a more economical path, that is, the path of Schleicher and not of Hitler, not to speak of the fact that Schleicher himself prefers it that way.

The fact that the source of existence of the Papen government consists in the neutralization of the irreconcilable camps, in no way signifies, of course, that the forces of the revolutionary proletariat and of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie weigh equally on the scale of history. The whole question shifts here onto the field of politics. Through the mechanics of the "Iron Front" the social democracy paralyzes the proletariat. With the policy of brainless ultimatism the Stalinist bureaucracy blocks the revolutionary way out for the workers. With a correct leadership of the proletariat, Fascism would be exterminated without difficulty and not a chink could remain open for Bonapartism. Unfortunately that is not the situation. The paralyzed strength of the proletariat has assumed the deceptive form of a "strength" of the Bonapartist clique. Therein lies the political formula of the present day.

The Papen government represents the impersonal intersection of great historical forces. Its independent weight is next to nil. Therefore it could do nothing but take fright at its own gesticulations and grow dizzy from the voids arising on all sides of it. By this and only by this is to be explained that in the deeds of the government up to now there have been two parts of cowardice to each part of audacity. With

Prussia, that is, the social democracy, the government played a sure game: it knew that these gentlemen would offer no resistance. But after it had dissolved the Reichstag, it summoned new elections and did not dare to postpone them. After proclaiming the state of martial law, it hastened to explain: It is only in order to facilitate the capitulation without a struggle of the social democratic leaders.

However, isn't there a Reichswehr? We are not inclined to forget it. Engels designated the State as armed detachments of people with material auxiliaries in the form of prisons, etc. With respect to the present governmental power, it can even be said that the Reichswehr alone really exists. But the Reichswehr in no way represents a submissive and guaranteed instrument in the hands of that group of people at whose head stands Papen. In reality, the government is rather a sort of political commission of the Reichswehr.

But with all its preponderance over the government, the Reichswehr can nevertheless lay no claim to any independent political role. A hundred thousand soldiers, no matter how fused and steeled they may be (which still requires testing), are incapable of commanding a nation of sixty-five millions, torn by the profoundest social antagonisms. The Reichswehr represents only one element in the interplay of forces, and not the decisive one.

In its fashion, the new Reichswehr does not reflect badly the political situation in the country which has led to the Bonapartist experiment. The parliament without a majority, with irreconcilable wings, offers an obvious and irrefutable argument in favor of dictatorship. Once more the limits of democracy emerge in all their obviousness. Where it is a question of the foundations of society itself, it is not parlia-

mentary arithmetic that decides. What decides is the struggle.

road the attempts at forming a government will take in the next days. Our hypotheses would come tardily in any case, and besides, it is not the possible transitional forms and combinations which decide the question. A bloc of the Right wing with the Center would signify the "legalization" of the seizure of power by the National-Socialists, that is, the most suitable cloak for the Fascist coup d'Etat. What relationships would develop in the early days between Hitler, Schleicher and the Center leaders, is more important for them than it is for the German people. Politically, all the conceivable combinations with Hitler signify the dissolution of bureaucracy, courts, police and army into Fascism.

If it is assumed that the Center will not agree to a coalition, in which it would have to pay with a rupture with its own workers for the role of a brake in Hitler's locomotive,—then in this case only the concealed extra-parliamentary road remains. A combination without the Center would more easily and speedily insure the predominance of the National-Socialists. If the latter do not immediately unite with Papen and at the same time do not pass over to the immediate assault, then the Bonapartist character of the government will have to emerge more sharply: von Schleicher would have his "hundred days" . . . without the preceding Napoleonic years.

Hundred days—no, we are fighting far too generously. The Reichswehr does not decide. Schleicher does not suffice. The extra-parliamentary dictatorship of the Junkers and the magnates of financial capital can be stood firmly on its feet only by the

method of a wearisome and relentless civil war. Will Hitler be able to fulfill this task? That depends not only upon the evil will of Fascism, but also upon the revolutionary will of the proletariat.

CHAPTER TWO

Bourgeoisie, Petty Bourgeoisie and Proletariat

ANY serious analysis of the political situation must take as its point of departure the mutual relations among the three classes: the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie (including the peasantry) and the proletariat.

The economically powerful big bourgeoisie, in itself, represents an infinitesimal minority of the nation. To enforce its domination, it must ensure a definite mutual relationship with the petty bourgeoisie and through its mediation, with the proletariat.

To understand the dialectic of the relationship between the three classes, we must differentiate three historical stages: at the dawn of capitalist development, when the bourgeoisie required revolutionary methods to solve its tasks; in the period of bloom and maturity of the capitalist régime, when the bourgeoisie endowed its domination with orderly, pacific, conservative, democratic forms; finally, at the decline of capitalism, when the bourgeoisie is forced to resort to methods of civil war against the proletariat to protect its right of exploitation.

The political programs characteristic of these three stages: *Jacobinism*, reformist *democracy* (social democracy included) and *Fascism* are basically programs of petty bourgeois currents. This fact alone, more than anything else, shows of what tremendous—rather, of what decisive, importance the self-determination of the petty bourgeois masses of the people is for the whole fate of bourgeois society.

Nevertheless, the relationship between the bourgeoisie and its basic social support, the petty bourgeoisie, does not at all rest upon reciprocal confidence and pacific collaboration. In its mass, the petty bourgeoisie is an exploited and disfranchised class. It regards the bourgeoisie with envy and often with hatred. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, while utilizing the support of the petty bourgeoisie, distrusts the latter, for it very correctly fears its tendency to break down the barriers set up for it from above.

While they were laying out and clearing the road for bourgeois development, the Jacobins engaged, at every step, in sharp clashes with the bourgeoisie. They served it in intransigent struggle against it. After they had culminated their limited historical rôle, the Jacobins fell, for the domination of capital was predetermined.

For a whole series of stages, the bourgeoisie entrenched its power under the form of parliamentary democracy. Even then, not peacefully and not voluntarily. The bourgeoisie was mortally afraid of universal suffrage. But in the last instance, it succeeded, with the aid of a combination of violent measures and concessions, of privations and reforms, in subordinating within the framework of formal democracy, not only the petty bourgeoisie, but in considerable measure also the proletariat, by means of the new petty bourgeoisie—the labor aristocracy. In August 1914 the imperialist bourgeoisie was able, with the means of parliamentary democracy, to lead millions of workers and peasants into the war.

But precisely with the war there begins the distinct decline of capitalism and above all, of its democratic form of domination. It is now no longer a matter of new reforms and alms, but of cutting down and abolishing the old ones. Therewith the bourgeoisie comes into conflict not only with the institutions of proletarian

democracy (trade unions and political parties) but also with parliamentary democracy, within the framework of which arose the labor organizations. Therefore, the campaign against "Marxism" on the one hand and against democratic parliamentarism on the other.

But just as the summits of the liberal bourgeoisie in its time were unable, by their own force alone, to get rid of feudalism, monarchy and the church, so the magnates of finance capital are unable, by *their* force alone, to cope with the proletariat. They need the support of the petty bourgeoisie. For this purpose, it must be whipped up, put on its feet, mobilized, armed. But this method has its dangers. While it makes use of Fascism, the bourgeoisie nevertheless fears it. Pilsudski was forced, in May 1926, to save bourgeois society by a coup d'État directed against the traditional parties of the Polish bourgeoisie. The matter went so far that the official leader of the Polish Communist Party, Warski, who came over from Rosa Luxemburg not to Lenin, but to Stalin, took the coup d'État of Pilsudski to be the road of the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship" and called upon the workers to support Pilsudski.

At the session of the Polish Commission of the Executive Committee of the C. I. on July 2, 1926, the author of these lines said on the subject of the events in Poland:

"Taken as a whole, the Pilsudski overthrow is the petty bourgeois, "plebeian" manner of solving the burning problems of bourgeois society in its state of decomposition and decline. We have here already a direct resemblance to Italian Fascism.

"These two currents indubitably possess common features: they recruit their shock troops first of all from the petty bourgeoisie; Pilsudski as well as Mussolini worked with extra-parliamentary means, with open violence, with the methods of civil war; both were

concerned, not with the destruction, but with the preservation of bourgeois society. While they raised the petty bourgeoisie on its feet, they openly aligned themselves after the seizure of power, with the big bourgeoisie. Involuntarily, an historical generalization comes up here, recalling the evaluation given by Marx of Jacobinism as the plebeian method of settling accounts with the feudal enemies of the bourgeoisie . . . That was in the *period of the rise* of the bourgeoisie. Now we must say, in the *period of the decline* of bourgeois society, the bourgeoisie again needs the "plebeian" method of resolving its no longer progressive, but entirely reactionary tasks. In this sense, *Fascism is a caricature of Jacobinism*.

"The bourgeoisie is incapable of maintaining itself in power by the means and methods of the parliamentary state created by itself, it needs Fascism as a weapon of self-defense, at least in critical instances. Nevertheless, the bourgeoisie does not like the "plebeian" method of resolving its tasks. It was always hostile to Jacobinism, which cleared the road for the development of bourgeois society with its blood. The Fascists are immeasurably closer to the decadent bourgeoisie than the Jacobins were to the rising bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, the sober bourgeoisie does not look very favorably even upon the Fascist mode of resolving its tasks, for the concussions, although they are brought forth in the interests of bourgeois society, are linked up with dangers to it. Therefore, the opposition between Fascism and the bourgeois parties.

"The big bourgeoisie likes Fascism as little as a man with aching molars likes to have his teeth pulled. The sober circles of bourgeois society have followed with misgivings the work of the dentist Pilsudski, but in the last analysis they have become reconciled to the inevitable, though with threats, with horse-deals and all sorts of trading. Thus the petty bourgeoisie's idol

of yesterday becomes transformed into the gendarme of capital."

To this attempt at marking out the historical place of Fascism as the political reliever of the social democracy, there was counterposed the theory of social Fascism. At first it could appear as a pretentious, blustering but harmless stupidity. Subsequent events have shown what a pernicious influence the Stalinist theory actually exercised on the entire development of the Communist International.*

Does it follow from the historical rôle of Jacobinism, of democracy and of Fascism that the petty bourgeoisie is condemned to remain a tool in the hands of capital to the end of its days? If things were so, then the dictatorship of the proletariat would be impossible in a number of countries in which the petty bourgeoisie constitutes the majority of the nation and more than that, it would be rendered extremely difficult in other countries in which the petty bourgeoisie represents an important minority. Fortunately, things are not so. The experience of the Paris Commune first showed, at least within the limits of one city, just as the experience of the October revolution has shown after it on a much larger scale and over an incomparably longer period, that the alliance of the petty bourgeoisie and the big bourgeoisie is not indissoluble. Since the petty bourgeoisie is incapable

* While concealing the speech quoted above from the Party and the Comintern, the Stalinist press undertook one of its customary campaigns against it. Manuilsky wrote that I had dared to "put on the same plane" Fascists and Jacobins, who were, after all, our revolutionary ancestors. The latter remark is more or less correct. Unfortunately these ancestors can show more than a few descendants who are unable to exercise their minds. An echo of the old dispute can be found even in the latest productions of Muenzenberg against "Trotskyism". But let us leave this subject.

of an *independent* policy (that is also why the petty bourgeois "democratic dictatorship" is unrealizable) no other choice is left for it than that between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

In the epoch of the rise, the growth and the bloom of capitalism the petty bourgeoisie, despite acute outbreaks of discontent, generally marched obediently in the capitalist harness. Nor could it do anything else. But under the conditions of capitalist disintegration and of the impasse in the economic situation, the petty bourgeoisie strives, seeks, attempts to tear itself loose from the fetters of the old masters and rulers of society. It is quite capable of linking up its fate with that of the proletariat. For that, only one thing is needed: the petty bourgeoisie must acquire faith in the ability of the proletariat to lead society onto a new road. The proletariat can inspire this faith only by its strength, by the firmness of its actions, by a skillful offensive against the enemy, by the success of its revolutionary policy.

But, woe if the revolutionary party does not measure up to the height of the situation! The daily struggle of the proletariat sharpens the instability of bourgeois society. The strikes and the political disturbances aggravate the economic situation of the country. The petty bourgeoisie could reconcile itself temporarily to the growing privations, if it arrived by experience at the conviction that the proletariat is in a position to lead it onto a new road. But if the revolutionary party, in spite of a class struggle becoming incessantly more accentuated, proves time and again to be incapable of uniting the working class about it, if it vacillates, becomes confused, contradicts itself, then the petty bourgeoisie loses patience and begins to look upon the revolutionary workers as those responsible for its own misery. All the bourgeois parties, including the so-

cial democracy, turn its thoughts in this very direction. When the social crisis takes on an intolerable acuteness, a particular party appears on the scene with the direct aim of agitating the petty bourgeoisie to a white heat and of directing its hatred and its despair against the proletariat. In Germany, this historical function is fulfilled by National-Socialism, a broad current whose ideology is composed of all the putrid vapors of disintegrating bourgeois society.

The principal political responsibility for the growth of Fascism rests, of course, on the shoulders of the social democracy. Ever since the imperialist war, the labors of this party have been reduced to uprooting from the consciousness of the proletariat the idea of an independent policy, to implanting within it the belief in the eternity of capitalism and to forcing it to its knees time and again before the decadent bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie can follow the worker only when it sees in him the new master. The social democracy teaches the worker to be a lackey. The petty bourgeoisie will not follow a lackey. The policy of reformism deprives the proletariat of the possibility of leading the plebeian masses of the petty bourgeoisie and thereby alone converts the latter into cannon fodder for Fascism.

Politically, however, the question is not settled for us with the responsibility of the social democracy. Ever since the beginning of the war we have denounced this party as the agency of the imperialist bourgeoisie within the ranks of the proletariat. Out of this new orientation of the revolutionary Marxists arose the Third International. Its task consisted in uniting the proletariat under the banner of the revolution and thereby securing for it the directing influence over the oppressed masses of the petty bourgeoisie in the towns and on the countryside.

The post-war period, in Germany more than anywhere else, was an epoch of economic impasse and of civil war. The international conditions as well as the domestic ones pushed the country imperiously on the road to socialism. Every step of the social democracy revealed its decadence and its impotence, the reactionary import of its politics, the venality of its leaders. What other conditions are needed for the development of the Communist party? And yet, after the first few years of significant successes, German Communism entered into an era of vacillations, zigzags, alternating turns to opportunism and adventurism. The centrist bureaucracy has systematically weakened the proletarian vanguard and prevented it from bringing the class under its leadership. Therewith, it has robbed the proletariat as a whole of the possibility of drawing under its direction the oppressed masses of the petty bourgeoisie. The Stalinist bureaucracy bears the direct and immediate responsibility for the growth of Fascism before the proletarian vanguard.

CHAPTER THREE

Alliance or Struggle Between Social Democracy and Fascism

TO UNDERSTAND the interrelationship of the classes in the form of a schema, fixed once and for all, is comparatively simple. The evaluation of the concrete relations between the classes in every given situation is immeasurably more difficult.

The German big bourgeoisie is at present vacillating—a condition which the big bourgeoisie, in general, very rarely experiences. One part has definitely come to be convinced of the inevitability of the Fascist path and would like to accelerate the operation. The other part hopes to become master of the situation with the aid of a Bonapartist military-police dictatorship. No one in this camp desires a return to the Weimar “democracy”.

The petty bourgeoisie is split up. National-Socialism, which has united the overwhelming majority of the intermediate classes under its banner, wants to take the whole power into its own hands. The democratic wing of the petty bourgeoisie, which still has millions of workers behind it, wants a return to democracy according to the Ebertian model. In the meantime, it is prepared to support the Bonapartist dictatorship at least passively. The social democracy figures as follows: Under the pressure of the Nazis, the Papen-Schleicher government will be forced to establish a balance by strengthening its Left wing; meanwhile, an alleviation of the crisis will perhaps ensue; the petty

bourgeoisie will perhaps "sober up"; capitalism will perhaps decrease its frantic pressure upon the working class,—and with the aid of God everything will once again be in order.

The Bonapartist clique actually does not desire the complete victory of Fascism. It would not by any means be disinclined to utilize the support of the social democracy within certain bounds. But for this purpose, it would have to "tolerate" the workers' organizations, which is conceivable only, if at least to a certain extent, the legal existence of the Communist party is to be allowed. Moreover, support of the military dictatorship by the social democracy would push the workers irresistibly into the ranks of Communism. By seeking a means of support against the brown devil, the government would very soon become subject to the blows of the red Beelzebub.

The official Communist press declares that the toleration of Bruening by the social democracy paved the road for Papen and that the half-toleration of Papen will accelerate the arrival of Hitler. That is entirely correct. Within these boundaries, there are no differences of opinion between ourselves and the Stalinists. But this precisely signifies that in times of social crisis the politics of reformism no longer turn against the masses alone but against itself. In this process the critical moment has at present come into play.

Hitler tolerates Schleicher, the social democracy does not oppose Papen. If this situation could really be assured for a long period of time, then the social democracy would become transformed into the Left wing of Bonapartism and leave to Fascism the role of the Right wing. Theoretically, it is not, of course, excluded that the present, unprecedented crisis of German capitalism will not lead to any conclusive solution, i. e., either end with the victory of the pro-

letariat or with the triumph of the Fascist counter-revolution. If the Communist party continues its policy of stupid ultimatism and thereby saves the social democracy from inevitable collapse; if Hitler does not within the near future decide upon a coup d'Etat and thereby provoke disintegration inside of his own ranks; if the economic conjuncture takes an upward trend before Schleicher falls—then the Bonapartist combination of Paragraph 48 of the Weimar Constitution, of the Reichswehr, the semi-oppositional social democracy, and semi-oppositional Fascism could perhaps maintain itself (up to a new social impetus, which is to be expected in any case).

But offhand, we are still far from such a happy fulfillment of the conditions, which form the subject of social democratic day dreams. It is by no means guaranteed. Even the Stalinists hardly believe in the power of resistance or the durability of the Papen-Schleicher régime. All indications point to the decomposition of the Wels-Schleicher-Hitler triangle even before it has begun to take shape.

But perhaps it will be replaced by a Hitler-Wels combination? According to Stalin they are "twins, not antipodes". Let us assume that the social democracy would, without fearing its own workers, want to sell its toleration to Hitler. But Hitler does not need this commodity: he needs not the toleration, but the abolition of the social democracy. The Hitler government can only accomplish its task by breaking the resistance of the proletariat and by removing all the possible organs of its resistance. Therein lies the historical role of Fascism.

The Stalinists confine themselves to a purely psychological, or more exactly, to a purely moral evaluation of those cowardly and avaricious petty bourgeois who lead the social democracy. Can we actually assume

that these inveterate traitors would separate themselves from the bourgeoisie and oppose it? Such an idealistic method has very little in common with Marxism, which proceeds not from what people think about themselves and what they desire but from the conditions in which they are placed and from the changes which these conditions will undergo.

The social democracy supports the bourgeois régime, not for the gains of the coal, the steel and the other magnates, but for the sake of those gains which it itself can obtain as a party, in the person of its numerically great and powerful apparatus. To be sure, Fascism in no way threatens the bourgeois régime, for the defense of which the social democracy exists. But Fascism endangers that rôle which the social democracy fulfills in the bourgeois régime and the income which the social democracy derives from this rôle it plays. Even though the Stalinists forget this side of the matter, the social democracy itself does not for one moment lose from its sight the mortal danger with which a victory of Fascism threatens *it*—not the bourgeoisie, but it—the social democracy.

About three years ago, when we pointed out that the point of departure in the coming political crisis in Austria and in Germany would in all probability be fixed by the incompatibility of social democracy and Fascism; when, based upon this, we rejected the theory of social Fascism which was not disclosing but concealing the approaching conflict; when we called attention to the possibility that the social democracy, a significant part of its apparatus along with it, would be forced by the march of events into a struggle against Fascism and that this would be a favorable point of departure for the Communist party for a further attack, very many Communists—not only hired functionaries, but even quite honest revolutionists—accused us of . . . “idealizing” the social democracy.

Nothing remained but to shrug our shoulders. It is hard to dispute with people whose thought stops there where the question first begins for the Marxist.

In conversations, I often cited the following example: the Jewish bourgeoisie in Czarist Russia represented an extremely frightened and demoralized part of the entire Russian bourgeoisie. And yet, insofar as the pogroms of the Black Hundreds, which were in the main directed against the Jewish poor, also hit the bourgeoisie, the latter was forced to take up its self-defense. To be sure, it did not show any remarkable bravery on this field either. But due to the danger hanging over their heads, the liberal Jewish bourgeoisie, for example, collected considerable sums for the arming of revolutionary workers and students. In this manner, a temporary practical agreement was arrived at between the most revolutionary workers, who were prepared to fight with guns in hand, and the most frightened group of the bourgeoisie, which had got into a scrape.

Last year I wrote that in the struggle against Fascism the Communists were duty-bound to come to a practical agreement not only with the devil and his granddam, but even with Grzesinsky. This sentence made its way through the entire Stalinist world press. Was better proof needed of the “social Fascism” of the Left Opposition? Many comrades had warned me in advance: “They are going to seize on this phrase”. I answered them: “It has been written so that they seize on it. Just let them seize upon this hot iron and burn their fingers. The blockheads must get their lesson.”

The course of the struggle has led to Von Papen making Grzesinsky acquainted with the inside of a jail. Did this episode follow from the theory of social Fascism and from the prognoses of the Stalinist bureaucracy? No, it occurred in complete contradiction of

the latter. Our evaluation of the situation, however, had such an eventuality in view and had assigned a definite place for it.

But the social democracy this time, too, avoided the struggle!, some Stalinist will object. Yes, it did avoid it. Whoever expected the social democracy, to go beyond the urging of its leaders and independently to take up the struggle, and at that, under conditions in which even the Communist party showed itself incapable of struggle, naturally had to be experience disappointment. We did not expect such miracles. Therefore we could not lay ourselves open to any "disappointments" about the social democracy.

Grzesinsky has not become transformed into a revolutionary tiger; that we will readily grant. But nevertheless, there is quite a difference between a situation in which Grzesinsky, sitting in his fortress, sends out police detachments for the safeguarding of "democracy" against revolutionary workers, and a situation in which the Bonapartist savior of capitalism puts Grzesinsky himself in jail, is there not? And are we not to take this difference into account politically; are we not to take advantage of it?

Let us turn back to the example cited above: it is not hard to grasp the difference between a Jewish manufacturer who tips the Czarist policeman for beating down the strikers and the same manufacturer who turns over money to the strikers of yesterday to obtain arms against the pogromists. The bourgeois remains the same. But from the change in the situation there results a change in relations. The Bolshevik conducted the strike against the manufacturer. Later on, they took money from the same manufacturer for the struggle against the pogroms. That did not, naturally, prevent the workers, when their hour had come, from turning their arms against the bourgeoisie.

Does all that has been said mean that the social

democracy as a whole will fight against Fascism? To this we reply: part of the social democratic functionaries will undoubtedly go over to the Fascists; a considerable section will creep under their beds in the hour of danger. The working masses also will not fight in their entirety. To guess in advance what part of the social democratic workers will be drawn into the struggle, and when, and what part of the apparatus they will tear along with them, is altogether impossible. That depends upon many circumstances, among them, also, upon the position of the Communist party. The policy of the united front has as its task to separate those who want to fight from those who do not; to push forward those who vacillate; finally to compromise the capitulationist leaders in the eyes of the workers in order to consolidate the fighting capacity of the latter.

How much time has been lost—aimlessly, senselessly, shamefully! How much could have been achieved, even in the last two years alone! Was it not clear in advance that monopolistic capital and its Fascist army would drive the social democracy with fists and blackjacks toward the road of opposition and of self-defense? This prognosis should have been unfolded before the eyes of the entire working class, the initiative should have been taken for the united front and this initiative should have been retained firmly in our hands at every new stage. It was not necessary to shout, nor to scream. An open game could have been played quietly. It would have sufficed to formulate, in a clear-cut manner, the inevitability of every next step of the enemy and to set up a practical program for a united front, without exaggerations and without haggling, but also without weakness and without concessions. How high the Communist party would stand today if it had assimilated the A B C of Leninist policy and applied it with the necessary perseverance!

CHAPTER FOUR

Thaelman's Twenty One Mistakes

IN THE MIDDLE of July appeared a brochure with Thälmann's answers to twenty-one questions by social democratic workers on how the "Red united front" is to be created. The brochure begins with the words: "Mightily the anti-Fascist united front rushes ahead!" On July 20 the Communist party called upon the workers to come out in a political strike. The appeal met with no response. Thus within five days was the tragic abyss revealed between bureaucratic rhetoric and political reality.

The party received 5,300,000 votes in the elections of July 31. By trumpeting forth this result as a tremendous victory, the party showed how greatly the defeats have diminished its claims and hopes. In the first balloting for the presidential election, on March 13, the party received almost five million votes. In the course of four and a half months—and what months!—it therefore barely gained three hundred thousand votes. The Communist press repeated hundreds of times in March that the number of votes would have been incomparably larger had it been a Reichstag election: in a presidential election, hundreds of thousands of sympathizers deemed it superfluous to lose any time over a "platonic" demonstration. If this March commentary is taken into consideration—and it deserves to be taken into consideration—it follows that the party has practically not grown at all in the last four and a half months.

In April, the social democracy elected Hindenburg, who thereupon carried out a *coup d'État* aimed directly at the former. One would think that this fact alone ought to have sufficed to convulse the structure of reformism to its very foundations. Add to this the further accentuation of the crisis with all its frightful consequences. Finally, on July 20, eleven days before the elections, the social democracy drew its tail miserably between its legs at the *coup d'État* of the federal president it elected. In such periods revolutionary parties grow feverishly. Whatever the social democracy, forced into a steel vise, may yet undertake to do, it must drive the workers away from it to the Left. But instead of striding forward with seven league boots, Communism marks time, vacillates, is on the retreat, and after each step forward it takes half a step backward. To exult over a victory only because the Communist party suffered no loss of votes on July 31, is to lose the sense of reality for good.

In order to understand why and how the revolutionary party condemns itself to a debasing impotence under exceptionally favorable political conditions, one must read Thälmann's answers to the social democratic workers. A wearisome and unpleasant job, but it may enlighten one on what is taking place in the minds of the Stalinist leaders.

To the question: "How do the Communists evaluate the character of the Papen government?", Thälmann gives several mutually contradictory replies. He begins with a reference to "the danger of the immediate establishment of the Fascist dictatorship." Then it follows that it does not yet exist? He speaks with complete accuracy of the government members as "representatives of trust capital, of the generals and of Junkerdom". A minute later he says about the same government: "this Fascist cabinet", and concludes his reply with the assertion that "the Papen government

... has set itself the aim of the immediate establishment of the Fascist dictatorship."

By disregarding the social and political distinctions between Bonapartism, that is, the régime of "civil peace" resting upon military-police dictatorship, and Fascism, that is, the régime of open civil war against the proletariat, Thälmann deprives himself in advance of the possibility of understanding what is taking place before his very eyes. If Papen's cabinet is a Fascist cabinet then what Fascist "danger" is he talking about? If the workers will believe Thälmann that Papen sets himself the aim (!) of establishing the Fascist dictatorship, then the probable conflict between Hitler and Papen-Schleicher will catch the party napping just as the conflict between Papen and Otto Braun did in its time.*

To the question, "Is the Communist Party of Germany sincere about the united front?", Thälmann naturally answers affirmatively, and for proof he refers to the fact that the Communists do not go hat in hand to Hindenburg and Papen. "No, we put the question of the struggle, of the struggle against the whole system, against capitalism. And here lies the kernel of the *sincerity* of our united front."

Thälmann manifestly does not understand what it is all about. The social democratic workers remain social democrats precisely because they still believe in the gradual, reformist road to the transformation of capitalism into socialism. Since they know that the Communists stand for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, the social democratic workers ask: Do you sincerely propose the united front to us? To this Thälmann replies; "Naturally, sincerely, for with us

* These lines were written at the beginning of August, before the negotiations between Hindenburg-Papen and Hitler.

it is a question of overthrowing the whole capitalist system".

Of course, it does not occur to us to conceal anything from the social democratic workers. Nevertheless, one must know the measure of things and preserve the political proportions. A skilled propagandist should have answered in the following manner: "You put your stakes on democracy; we believe that the only way out lies in the revolution. Yet we cannot and we do not want to make the revolution without you. Hitler is now the common foe. After the victory over him we shall draw the balance together with you and see whither the further road actually leads."

The auditors, peculiar as this may seem at first sight, not only listen forbearingly to the speaker but even agree with him many times. The secret of their forbearance, however, rests upon the fact that Thälmann's partners in the conversation not only belong to the Anti-Fascist Action but also call for the casting of votes for the Communist party. They are *former* social democrats who have gone over to the side of Communism. Such recruits can only be welcomed. But what is deceptive in the whole affair is that a conversation with workers who have broken with the social democracy is palmed off as a conversation with the social democratic mass. This cheap masquerade is highly characteristic of the whole present-day policy of Thälmann and Co.!

However this may be—the former social democrats put questions which actually agitate the social democratic mass. "Is the Anti-Fascist Action a Communist party business?" they ask. Thälmann replies: "No!" The proof? The Anti-Fascist Action "is no organization but a mass movement". As if it were not just the task of the Communist party to organize the mass movement. Still better is the second argument: the Anti-Fascist Action is non-partisan, for (!)

it directs itself against the capitalist state: "Karl Marx, in dealing with the lessons of the Paris Commune, already placed in the foreground in all sharpness, as the task of the working class, the question of smashing the bourgeois state apparatus." O hapless quotation! For what the social democrats want, regardless of Marx, is to perfect the bourgeois state, but not to smash it. They are not Communists, but reformists. Despite his intentions, Thälmann proves just the thing he would like to refute—the party character of the "Anti-Fascist Action."

The official leader of the Communist party obviously understands neither the situation nor the political thought of the social democratic workers. He does not understand what purpose the united front serves. With every one of his sentences, he delivers weapons to the reformist leaders and drives the social democratic workers to them.

The impossibility of any kind of joint step with the social democracy is demonstrated by Thälmann in the following manner: "In this connection we [?] must clearly recognize that the social democracy, even when it today mimics a sham opposition, will *at no moment* give up its actual thoughts of coalition and its compacts with the Fascist bourgeoisie." Even if this were right, there would nevertheless remain the task of proving it to the social democratic workers through experience. However, it is also false in essence. If the social democratic leaders do not want to abandon compacts with the bourgeoisie, the Fascist bourgeoisie, however, does abandon compacts with the social democracy. And this fact may become decisive for the fate of the social democracy. In the passage of power from Papen to Hitler, the bourgeoisie will in no way be able to spare the social democracy. The civil war has its laws. The reign of the Fascist terror will and can mean only the abolition of the social democracy.

Mussolini began with just that, so as to be able all the more unrestrainedly to crush the revolutionary workers. In any event, the "social Fascist" cherishes his hide. The Communist united front policy at the present time must proceed from the concern of the social democracy for its own hide. That will be the most realistic and at the same time, in its results, the most revolutionary policy.

But if the social democracy will "at no moment" separate itself from the Fascist bourgeoisie (although Matteoti "separated" himself from Mussolini), do not the social democratic workers, who want to take part in the Anti-Fascist Action, have to leave their party? Thus runs one question. To this Thälmann replies: "For us Communists it is a matter of course that social democratic or Reichsbanner workers may take part in the Anti-Fascist Action *without* having to leave their party." To show himself free from sectarianism, Thälmann adds: "If you were to stream into it by the millions, in a serried front, we would greet it with joy, even if a lack of clarity still exists in your minds, in our opinion, about certain questions of estimating the Social Democratic Party of Germany." Golden words! We consider your party to be Fascist, you consider it to be democratic, but let's not dispute over petty matters. It suffices for you to come to us "by the millions", without leaving your Fascist party. "Lack of clarity about certain questions" cannot constitute an obstacle. But, O, the lack of clarity in the heads of the all-powerful bureaucrats is an obstacle at every step.

To give depth to the question, Thälmann proceeds to say: "We do not put the question of party to party, but on a class basis." Like Seydewitz, Thälmann is prepared to renounce party interests in the interests of the class. The misfortune lies in this, that for a Marxist there cannot be such a contrast. Were not

its program the scientific formulation of the interests of the working class, the party would not be worth a penny.

Only, along with the crude mistake in principle, Thälmann's words contain also a practical absurdity. How is it possible not to put the question "of party to party" when that is just where the very essence of the question lies? Millions of workers follow the social democracy. Other millions—the Communist party. To the question of the social democratic workers: How shall we today achieve joint actions between *your* party and *ours* against Fascism, Thälmann answers: "on a class and not a party basis": stream toward us by the millions. Isn't this the most wretched bombast?

"We Communists," continues Thälmann, "do not want unity at any price." We cannot, in the interest of unity with the social democracy, "disavow the class content of our policy . . . and renounce strikes, struggles of the unemployed, actions of the tenants and revolutionary mass defense". The agreement on definite practical actions is misconstrued into an absurd *unity* with the social democracy. Out of the indispensability of the final revolutionary assault of *tomorrow*, is deduced the impermissibility of harmonized strike or self-defense actions for *today*. Whoever can see rhyme or reason in Thälmann's thoughts deserves a prize of distinction.

The auditors press: "Is an alliance of the C. P. G. and the S. D. P. G. possible in the struggle against the Papen government and against Fascism?" Thälmann mentions two or three facts as evidence that the social democracy does not fight against Fascism and concludes: "Every [!] S. D. P. G. comrade will say we are right [?] when we say that an alliance between the C. P. G. and the S. D. P. G. is impossible on the basis of these facts and also [!] for reasons of principle [! !]." The bureaucrat again assumes just the

thing that should be proved. Ultimatism acquires a particularly ludicrous character as soon as Thälmann replies to the question of the united front with organizations which embrace millions of workers. The social democrats must acknowledge that an agreement with their party is impossible because it is Fascist. Can Wels and Leipart be rendered a better service?

"We Communists, who reject any accord with the S. D. P. G. leaders . . . repeatedly declare that we are at all times ready for the anti-Fascist struggle with the militant social democratic and Reichsbanner comrades and with the lower [?] militant organizations." Where do the lower organizations come to an end? And what is to be done if the lower organizations submit to the discipline of the upper, and propose that the negotiations shall be begun with the latter? Finally, between the lower and the upper there are intermediate storeys. And can one prophecy where the dividing line will be between those who want to fight and those who dodge the struggle? This can be determined only in action and not by anticipatory appraisals. What sense is there in binding oneself hand and foot?

In DIE ROTE FAHNE of July 29, in a report of a Reichsbanner meeting, the noteworthy words of a social democratic company commander are mentioned: "The will to an anti-Fascist united front exists in the masses. If the leaders fail to take it into account, then I will go to the united front over their heads." The Communist paper reproduces these words without comment. Yet they contain the key to the whole tactic of the united front. The social democrat wants to fight against the Fascists in common with the Communists. He is already in doubt about the good will of his leaders. If the leaders refuse, says he, then I shall go over their heads. Social democrats similarly disposed can be counted by the dozens, hundreds, thousands, millions. It is the task of the Communist party really to show

them whether or not the social democratic leaders want to fight. This can be demonstrated only through experience, through a new, fresh experience, in a new situation. This experience will not be gained at one blow. The social democratic leaders must be subjected to a test: in the factory and workshop, in town and country, in the whole state, today and tomorrow. We must repeat our proposal, put it in a new form, from a new angle, adapted to the new situation.

But Thälmann will have none of it. On the ground of the "*principle*" distinctions shown to exist between the C. P. G. and the S. D. P. G. we reject negotiations from the top with the S. D. P. G.". This shattering argument is repeated by Thälmann several times. But if there were no "antagonisms in principle" then there would be no two parties. And if there were no two parties, there would be no question of the united front. Thälmann wants to prove far too much. Less—would be better.

Did not the founding of the Red Trade Union Organization, ask the workers, signify "a splitting of the organized working class"? No, replies Thälmann, and as proof he cites Engels' letter of 1895 against the æsthetic-sentimental philanthropists. Who is handing Thälmann such treacherous quotations? The R. T. U. O. is created in the spirit of unity and not of schism. Also, the worker is in no case to leave his trade union organization in order to join the R. T. U. O. On the contrary, it were better if the R. T. U. O. members remained in the trade unions in order to carry on oppositional work therein. Thälmann's words may sound convincing to Communists who have set themselves the task of fighting against the social democratic leadership. But as an answer to social democratic workers, who are concerned with trade union unity, Thälmann's words sound like a mockery. Why have you left our trade unions and organized yourselves

separately?—ask the social democratic workers. If you want to enter our separate organization in order to fight against the social democratic leadership, we do not demand of you to leave the trade unions, Thälmann replies. An appropriate reply, right on the head of the nail!

"Is there democracy within the C. P. G.?" ask the workers, passing over to another theme. Thälmann replies in the affirmative. And how! But he immediately adds unexpectedly: "In legality as well as in illegality, most particularly in the latter, the party must be on guard against spies, provocateurs and police agents." This interpolation is not made accidentally. The latest doctrine, proclaimed throughout the world in the brochure of a mysterious Büchner, justifies the strangulation of democracy in the interest of the struggle against spies. Whoever protests against the autocracy of the Stalinist bureaucracy must be declared a suspicious character at the very least. The police agents and provocateurs of every country revel with enthusiasm over this theory. They will hound Oppositionists louder than anyone else: this may divert attention from themselves and enable them to fish in troubled waters.

The flourishing of democracy is also demonstrated, according to Thälmann, by the fact that "the problems are dealt with at World Congresses and Conferences of the E. C. C. I." The speaker fails to report when the last World Congress took place. We will call it to mind: in July 1928, more than four years ago! Apparently no noteworthy questions have arisen since then. Why, be it asked in passing, doesn't Thälmann himself convoke an extraordinary German party convention to resolve the questions upon which depend the fate of the German proletariat? Certainly not because of an excess of party democracy.

So runs page after page. Thälmann replies to twenty-

one questions. Every reply—a mistake. In sum—twenty-one mistakes, not counting the small and secondary ones. And they are numerous.

Thälmann relates that the Bolsheviks broke with the Mensheviks in 1903. In reality, the split first took place in 1912. But even that did not prevent the February revolution in 1917 from finding united Bolshevik and Menshevik organizations over a large part of the country. As late as the beginning of April, Stalin came out for the unification of the Bolsheviks with Tseretelli's party—*not the united front but the fusion of the parties!* This was prevented only by Lenin's arrival.

Thälmann says that the Bolsheviks dispersed the Constituent Assembly in 1917. In reality this occurred at the beginning of 1918. Thälmann is not at all familiar with the history of the Russian revolution and the Bolshevik party.

Far worse, however, is the fact that he does not grasp the foundations of the Bolshevik tactic. In his "theoretical" articles, he even dares to dispute the fact that the Bolsheviks concluded an agreement with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists against Kornilov. As proof, he adduces quotations shoved under his door by somebody or other, which have nothing to do with the matter. But he forgets to answer the questions: Were there Committees for the Defense of the People throughout the land during the Kornilov putsch? Did they direct the struggle against Kornilov? Did representatives of the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists belong to these Committees? Yes, yes, yes. Were the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists in power at that time? Did they persecute the Bolsheviks as agents of the German general staff? Were thousands of Bolsheviks confined to prisons? Did Lenin hide in illegality? Yes, yes, yes. What quotations can refute these historical facts?

Let Thälmann appeal to his heart's content to Manuilsky, Losovsky and Stalin himself (if the latter ever opens his mouth). But let him leave in peace Leninism and the history of the Russian revolution: for him they are books sealed with seven seals.

* * *

In conclusion one must throw into relief still another question, which stands by itself: it concerns Versailles. The social democratic workers ask if the Communist party isn't making political concessions to National Socialism. In his reply, Thälmann continues to defend the slogan of "national emancipation" and to place it on the same plane with the slogan of social emancipation. The reparations—what is left of them now—are just as important to Thälmann as private ownership of the means of production. This policy is as if contrived uniquely to divert the attention of the worker from the basic problem, to weaken the blow against capitalism and to compel one to seek the principal foe and author of poverty on the other side of the frontier. However, now more than ever before, "the main enemy is at home!" Von Schleicher expressed this idea even more coarsely: before anything else, he declared on the radio on July 26, we must "put an end to the dirty swine at home"! This soldier's formula is very good. We pick it up willingly. Every Communist must firmly adopt it as his own. While the Nazis divert attention to Versailles, the Communist workers must retort to them with Schleicher's words: no, before anything else we must put an end to the dirty swine at home!

CHAPTER FIVE

The Checking of the Stalin-Thaelman Policy Against Their Own Experience

TACTICS are tested in the most critical and crucial moments. The strength of Bolshevism rested upon this, that its slogans and methods found their supreme confirmation as soon as the course of events demanded bold decisions. What value have principles which must be renounced as soon as the situation assumes a serious character?

Realistic policy bases itself upon the natural development of the class struggle. Sectarian policy endeavors to prescribe artificial regulations for the class struggle. The revolutionary situation signifies the highest accentuation of the class struggle. Just because of that, the realistic policy of Marxism, in the revolutionary situation, exercises a powerful force of attraction upon the mass. The sectarian policy, on the contrary, becomes all the weaker the more mighty is the impetus of events. The Blanquists and Proudhonists, taken by surprise by the events of the Paris Commune, did the opposite of what they had constantly preached. During the Russian revolution, the anarchists were forced to recognize the Soviets, that is, the organs of power. And so on without end.

The Comintern supports itself upon masses who were won over in the past by Marxism and fused together by the authority of the October revolution. Only, the policy of the present leading Stalin faction

seeks to command the class struggle instead of investing it with political expression. This is the essential feature of *bureaucratism* and in this it coincides with *sectarianism* from which it distinguishes itself sharply in other features. Thanks to the strong apparatus, to the material means of the Soviet state and to the authority of the October revolution, the Stalinist bureaucracy has been able, in comparatively calm periods, to impose for a length of time artificial measures of restraint upon the proletarian vanguard. But to the degree that the class struggle condenses itself into civil war, the bureaucratic prescriptions come into increasing collision with unrelenting reality. Faced by sharp turns in the situation, the arrogant and inflated bureaucracy easily lands in a muddle. If it cannot command, it capitulates. The policy of the Thälmann Central Committee in recent months will some day be studied as a model of the most pitiable and miserable headlessness.

Since the "Third Period" it was held to be inviolable that there could be no talk about agreements with the social democracy. It was not only inadmissible to assume the initiative in the united front, as the Third and Fourth World Congresses taught—but even proposals for common actions emanating from the social democracy had to be rejected. The reformist leaders are "sufficiently exposed." The experience of the past is sufficient. Instead of pursuing politics, the masses must be told history. To turn to the reformists with proposals means to acknowledge them capable of fighting. That alone would be Social Fascism, ect. Thus intoned the ear-deafening melody of the ultra-Leftist barrel-organ in the last three-four years. And look: in the Prussian Landtag, the Communist fraction proposed on June 22, unexpected by all and by itself, an agreement with the social democracy and even with the Center. The same thing was repeated in Hessen. In

face of the danger that the Präsidium of the Landtag might fall into the hands of the Nazis, all the consecrated principles flew to the devil. Isn't this astounding? And isn't it debasing?

To explain these goat-leaps, however, is not so difficult. As is known, many superficial liberals and radicals continue to joke their whole life long about religion and celestial powers, only to call for a priest when they face death or serious illness. So also in politics. The mark of Centrism is opportunism. Under the influence of external circumstances (tradition, mass pressure, political competition), Centrism is at certain times compelled to make a parade of radicalism. For this purpose it must overcome itself, violate its political nature. By spurring itself on with all its strength, it not infrequently lands at the extreme limit of formal radicalism. But hardly does the hour of serious danger strike than the true nature of Centrism breaks out to the surface. In so delicate a question as the defense of the Soviet Union the Stalinist bureaucracy always built much more upon the bourgeois pacifists, English trade union bureaucrats and French radicals than upon the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. Scarcely did an external danger approach than the Stalinists promptly sacrificed not only their ultra-Leftist phrases but also the vital interests of the international revolution—in the name of amity with uncertain and false “friends” of the genus of lawyers, writers and simple drawing room heroes. United front from above? Under no circumstances! At the same time, however, the Top-Commissar for Ambiguous Affairs, Münzenberg by name, fished around after the coat tails of all sorts of liberal jabberers and radical tripe “for the defense of the U. S. S. R.”

The Stalinist bureaucracy in Germany, as in every other country—except in the Soviet Union—is ex-

tremely dissatisfied with the compromising leadership of Barbusse in the affair of the Anti-War Congress. On this field, Thälmann, Foster and others would prefer to be radical. Yet in their own national affairs, every one of them proceeds according to the same model as the Moscow authorities: at the approach of a serious danger they cast off the inflated, falsified radicalism in order to reveal their true, that is, their opportunistic nature.

Was the initiative of the Communist Landtag fraction, as such, false and inadmissible? We don't think so. The Bolsheviks more than once proposed to the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists in 1917: “Take the power, we will support you against the bourgeoisie if it should resist.” Compromises are admissible and, under certain conditions—obligatory. The whole question lies in what aim the compromise shall subserve; how it looks to the masses; what its limits are. To confine the compromise to the Landtag or the Reichstag, to regard as an independent aim whether the president will be a social democrat or a Catholic democrat instead of a Fascist, means to sink completely into parliamentary cretinism. Completely different is the situation when the party sets itself the task of the systematic and planned struggle for the social democratic workers on the basis of the united front policy. A parliamentary agreement against Fascist predominance in the präsidium, etc., would in this case constitute merely one component part of the extra-parliamentary fighting agreement against Fascism. Naturally the Communist party would prefer to resolve the whole question at one blow outside of parliament. But preferences alone are not sufficient where the forces are lacking. The social democratic workers have demonstrated their faith in the magic power of the July 31 vote. It is from this fact that we must proceed. The former mistakes of the Communist

party (Prussian referendum, etc.) extraordinarily facilitated the sabotage of the united front practised by the reformist leaders. A technical parliamentary agreement—or even only the proposal for such an agreement—must help free the Communist party from the accusation that it is collaborating with the Fascists against the social democracy. This is no independent action, but solely the clearing of the road to a fighting agreement or at least to the struggle for a fighting agreement of the mass organizations.

The difference between the two lines is entirely obvious. The joint struggle with the social democratic organizations can, and in its unfolding it must, assume a revolutionary character. The possibility for an approach to the social democratic masses can and must be paid for, under certain conditions, even with parliamentary agreements at the top. But for a Bolshevik, this is merely the *admission price*. The Stalinist bureaucracy acts in the opposite manner: it not only rejects fighting agreements, but still worse, it maliciously destroys those agreements which arise from below. At the same time, it proposes to the social democratic deputies a parliamentary accord. This means that at the moment of danger it declares its own ultra-Leftist theory and praxis to be worthless; only it does not replace it with the policy of revolutionary Marxism but with an unprincipled parliamentary combination in the spirit of the “lesser evil”.

We will indeed be told, the Prussian and Hessian episodes were a mistake of the deputies and were made good again by the Central Committee. In the first place, a decision so important in principle should not have been taken without the Central Committee: the mistake falls back completely upon the latter as well; in the second place: how explain that the “steel-hard”, “consistent”, “Bolshevist” policy, after months of

blustering and screeching, of polemic, of villification and expulsions, at once gives way at the critical moment to an opportunistic “mistake”?

But the matter is not confined to the Landtag. Thälmann-Remmele have absolutely renounced themselves and their own school in a much more responsible and critical question. On the eve of July 20, the Central Committee of the Communist party adopted the following decision:

“The Communist party, before the proletarian public, addresses to the S. P. D., to the A. D. G. B., and to the Afa-Bund the question if they are prepared to carry out, together with the Communist party, the general strike for the proletarian demands.”

This decision, so important and unexpected, was made public by the Central Committee in its circular letter of July 26 without any commentary. Can a more annihilating judgment be made of its whole preceding policy? The approach to the reformist summits with the proposal of joint actions was but yesterday declared to be social-Fascist and counter-revolutionary. Because of this question Communists were expelled. On this ground the struggle against “Trotskyism” was conducted. How then was this Central Committee suddenly able, at one stroke, on the eve of July 20, to bow before what it had the day before banished? And to what tragic state has the bureaucracy brought the party when the Central Committee could dare to come before it with its amazing decision without explaining or justifying it!

The policy is tested upon such turns. The Central Committee of the German Communist Party in reality demonstrated to the whole world on the eve of July 20: “Up to this moment our course was good for nothing.” An involuntary but completely correct admission. Unfortunately, even the proposal of July 20, which overthrew the preceding policy, could in no case yield a

positive result. An appeal to the summits—independently of the present answer of these summits—can become of revolutionary significance only when it has been previously prepared from below, that is, when it is based upon the whole policy in its totality. But the Stalinist bureaucracy repeated to the social democratic workers, day in and day out: “We Communists reject any connection with the S. P. D. leaders” (see Thälmann’s Answers”, chap. 4). The unprepared, unexpected, unmotivated proposal of July 20 was suitable only for exposing the Communist leadership by revealing its inconsistency, lack of seriousness, inclination to panic and adventuristic leaps.

The policy of the Centrist bureaucracy helps the mighty pressure of events drives a hundred thousand new workers under the Communist banner, it takes place in spite of the Stalin-Thälmann policy. Precisely because of this the future of the party is in no way assured.

CHAPTER SIX

What They Say about the United Front in Prague

‘WHEN THE Communist International made a united front with the social democratic leaders in 1926,” wrote the central organ of the Czechoslovakian Communist party, RUDE PRAVO, on February 27, 1932, allegedly in the name of a worker-correspondent “from the bench”, “it did this in order to *expose* them before the masses of supporters, and at that time Trotsky was terribly opposed to it. Now, when the social democracy has so discredited itself by its countless betrayals of the workers’ struggles, Trotsky proposes the united front with its leaders . . . Trotsky is today against the Anglo-Russian Committee of 1926, but for any sort of Anglo-Russian Committee of 1932.”

These lines lead us right to the heart of the question. In 1926, the Comintern sought to “expose” the reformist leaders with the aid of the united front policy, and that was right. But since then the social democracy has “discredited” itself. Before whom? There are still more workers following it than the Communist party. This is sad but true. The task of exposing the reformist leaders thus remains unsolved. If the method of the united front was good in 1926, why should it be bad in 1932?

“Trotsky is for an Anglo-Russian Committee of 1932, against the Anglo-Russian Committee of 1926.”

In 1926, the united front was concluded only at the top, between the leaders of the Soviet trade unions and the British trade unionists, not in the name of definite practical actions of the masses separated from each other by state frontiers and social conditions, but upon the basis of a friendly-diplomatic, pacifist-evasive "platform". During the miners' strike—and later the general strike—the Anglo-Russian Committee could not even come together, for the "allies" pulled in two opposite directions: the Soviet trade unions strove to assist the strikers, the British trade unionists sought to break the strike. The substantial contributions collected by the Russian workers were rejected by the General Council as "damned gold". Only after the strike had been finally betrayed and broken did the Anglo-Russian Committee come together again to the scheduled banquet to exchange small talk. Thus did the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee serve to cover up the reformist strike-breakers before the working masses.

At the present time we are speaking of something quite different. In Germany the social democratic and the Communist workers stand on the same ground, before the same danger. They mingle with each other in factories, in trade unions, at the unemployment registries, etc. It is not a question here of a word-"platform" of the leaders, but of thoroughly concrete tasks which are calculated to draw the mass organizations directly into the struggle.

The united front policy on a national scale is ten times harder than on a local scale. The united front policy on an international scale is a hundred times harder than on a national scale. To unite with the British reformists around so general a slogan as "defense of the U. S. S. R." or "defense of the Chinese revolution", is to talk the blue out of the sky. In

Germany, on the contrary, there is the immediate danger of the destruction of the workers' organizations, the social democratic included. To expect the social democracy to fight for the defense of the Soviet Union against the German bourgeoisie would be an illusion. But we certainly can expect that the social democracy will fight for the defense of its mandates, its meetings, periodicals, treasuries and finally, for its own head.

Only, even in Germany we in no way advocate lapsing into a united front fetishism. An agreement is an agreement. It remains in effect so long as it serves the practical goal for which it was concluded. If the reformists begin to curb or to sabotage the movement, the Communists must always put to themselves the question: is it not time to tear up the agreement and to lead the masses further under our own banner? Such a policy is not an easy one. But who has ever argued that to lead the proletariat to victory is a simple task? By counterposing the year 1926 to the year 1932, RUDE PRAVO has demonstrated only its lack of comprehension of what occurred six years ago as well as what is happening today.

The "worker-correspondent" from the imaginary bench also turns his attention to the example adduced by me of the agreement of the Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists. "All that time", he writes, "Kerensky really fought for a certain time against Kornilov and at the same time helped the proletariat smash Kerensky. That the German social democracy today does not fight against Fascism is evident to any little child."

The Thälmann who in no way resembles a "little child" contends that an agreement of the Russian Bolsheviks with the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists never even existed. RUDE PRAVO, as we see, pursues a different course. The agreement it does not deny.

But according to its conception, the agreement was justified by this, that Kerensky really fought against Kornilov, in distinction to the social democracy which is preparing the road to power for Fascism. The idealization of Kerensky here is quite astounding. When did Kerensky begin to fight against Kornilov? At the very moment when Kornilov swung the Cossack's saber over Kerensky's own head, that is, on the eve of August 26, 1917. On the previous day, Kerensky was still in a direct conspiracy with Kornilov with the aim of jointly crushing the Petrograd workers and soldiers. If Kerensky began to "fight" against Kornilov or more correctly, to offer no resistance, for a time, to the fight against Kornilov, then it was only because the Bolsheviks left him no other alternative. That Kornilov and Kerensky, both of them conspirators, broke with each other and came into open conflict, was to a certain extent a surprise. That it would have to come to a collision between German Fascism and the social democracy, could and should have been foreseen, were it only on the basis of the Italian and Polish experiences. Why should an agreement with Kerensky against Kornilov have been concluded, and why is it forbidden to preach, to fight for, to advocate and to prepare an agreement with the social democratic mass organizations? Why must such agreements be destroyed wherever they have come into being? That, however, is just how Thälmann and Company proceed.

RUDE PRAVO naturally pounced ravenously upon my words that an agreement on fighting actions may be made with the devil, with his grandmother and even with Noske and Grzesinski. "Look, Communist workers," writes the paper, "you've got to come to terms with Grzesinski who has already shot so many of your comrades-in-arms. Come to an agreement with him for he is to fight together with you against the Fasc-

ists, with whom he hobnobs at banquets and in the boards of management of factories and banks." The whole question is shifted here onto the plane of spurious sentimentality. Such an objection is worthy of an anarchist, an old Russian Left wing Social Revolutionist, a "revolutionary pacifist" or of Münzenberg himself. There isn't a glimmer of Marxism in it.

First of all: is it correct that Grzesinski is a workers' hangman? Absolutely correct. But wasn't Kerensky a hangman of the workers and peasants in far greater measure than Grzesinski? Nevertheless, RUDE PRAVO approves after the fact the practical agreement with Kerensky.

To support the hangman in every action directed against the workers, is a crime, if not treachery: that is just what the alliance of Stalin with Chiang Kai-Shek consisted of. But if this same Chinese hangman were to find himself engaged tomorrow in a war with the Japanese imperialists, then practical fighting agreements of the Chinese workers with the hangman Chiang Kai-Shek would be quite permissible and even—a duty.

Did Grzesinski hobnob with the Fascists at banquets? I do not know, but I'm quite prepared to grant it. Only, Grzesinski was subsequently obliged to sit in the Berlin prison, not in the name of socialism, it is true, but only because he was loath to give up his warm seat to the Bonapartists and the Fascists. Had the Communist party openly declared at least a year ago: against the Fascist assassins we are prepared to fight jointly even with Grzesinski: had it invested this formula with a fighting character, developed it in speeches and articles, brought it into the depths of the masses—Grzesinski would have been unable to demend before the masses, his capitulation, in July with references to the sabotage of the Communist party. He

would either have had to go along with this or that active step or else expose himself hopelessly in the eyes of his own workers. Isn't this clear?

To be sure, even if Grzesinski were drawn into the struggle by the logic of his situation and the pressure of the masses, he would be an extremely unreliable, a thoroughly perfidious ally. His principal thought would be to pass over as quickly as possible from struggle or half-struggle to an agreement with the capitalists. But the masses set into motion, even the social democratic masses, do not come to a halt as easily as do outraged police chiefs. The approach between the social democratic and the Communist workers in the process of the struggle would offer the Communist party leaders a far broader possibility for influencing the social democratic workers, especially in face of the common danger. And that is precisely what the final aim of the united front consists in.

* * * *

To reduce the whole policy of the proletariat to agreements with the reformist organizations or, still worse, to the abstract slogan of "unity", is something that only spineless Centrists of the stripe of the Socialist Workers Party can do. For the Marxists, the united front policy is merely one of the methods in the course of the class struggle. Under certain conditions this method becomes completely useless; it would be absurd to want to conclude an agreement with the reformists on the socialist upheaval. But there are conditions under which the rejection of the united front may ruin the revolutionary party for many decades to come. That is the situation in Germany at the present time.

The united front on the international scale, as we have said above, contains the greatest difficulties and dangers, for there the formulation of the practical

tasks and the organization of mass control is harder. That is how matters stand above all in the question of the struggle against war. The prospects of joint actions are far slighter here, the possibilities of subterfuge and deception by the reformists and pacifists are far greater. By this, of course, we do not contend that the united front in this field is out of the question. On the contrary, we demanded that the Comintern should turn directly and immediately to the Second and the Amsterdam Internationals with the proposal for a joint anti-war congress. It would then have been the task of the Comintern to work out the most concrete possible obligations, applicable to the various countries and differing circumstances. Were the social democracy compelled to agree to such a congress, the problem of war, providing there were a correct policy on our side, could be driven into its ranks like a sharp wedge.

The first premise for this: utmost clarity, political as well as organizational. There is involved an agreement of proletarian, million-membered organizations, which are today still divided by deep antagonisms in principle. No ambiguous intermediaries, no diplomatic masqueradings and hollow pacifist formulæ!

The Comintern, however, found it proper this time also to act counter to the A B C of Marxism: while it refused to enter into open negotiations with the reformist Internationals, it opened up negotiations behind the scenes with Friedrich Adler through the medium—of the pacifist literary gentleman and first class muddlehead, Henri Barbusse. As a result of this policy, Barbusse gathered together in Amsterdam half-masked Communist or "related", "sympathizing" organizations and groups, together with the pacifist free lancers of all countries. The most honest and sincere among the latter—and they are the minority—

can each say for himself: "I and my confusion." Who needed this masquerade, this bazaar of intellectualistic conceit, this Münzenbergerie, which turns into downright political charlatanry?*

But let us return to Prague. Five months after the appearance of the article discussed above, the same journal printed the article of one of the party leaders, Kl. Gottwald, which bears the character of an appeal to the Czechoslovakian workers of the different tendencies to make fighting agreements. The Fascist danger menaces all of Central Europe: the onslaught of the reaction can be beaten off only by the unity of the proletariat; no time should be lost, it is already "five minutes to twelve". The appeal is very passionately written. In vain, however, does Gottwald swear, following Seydewitz and Thälmann, that he is not pursuing the interests of the party but the interests of the class: such a contrast is absolutely improper in the mouth of a Marxist. Gottwald stigmatizes the sabotage of the social democratic leaders. It is needless to say that the truth here is entirely on his side. Unfortunately, the author says nothing direct about the policy of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party: evidently he is not resolved upon defending it, but does not yet dare to criticize it. Gottwald himself, nevertheless, goes into the painful question, not

* The fact that the Brandlerites (see their Stuttgart *Tribune* of August 27), carefully separated themselves from us in the question too, and supported the masquerade of Stalin, Manuilsky, Losovsky, Muenzenberg, surprises us least of all. After supplying the model of their united front policy in Saxony in 1923, Brandler-Thalheimer thereupon supported the Stalinist policy towards the Kuo Min Tang and the Anglo-Russian Committee. How can they deprive themselves of the opportunity to enlist under Barbusse's banner? If they did not, their political physiognomy would not be rounded out.

resolutely, it is true, but still fairly correctly. After he has called upon the workers of the various tendencies to come to an agreement in the factories, Gottwald writes: "Many of you may perhaps say: Unite there 'at the top', we 'below' will get together pretty easily. We believe", continues the author, "that the most important thing is for the workers to agree 'below'. And as for the leaders: we have already said that we combine even with the devil if only it is directed against the rulers and in the interests of the workers. And we say to you openly: if your leaders give up their alliance with the bourgeoisie for even a single instant, proceed in reality against the rulers even in one question—we will greet it and support them in it."

Almost everything necessary is said here, and almost the way it should be said. Gottwald did not even forget to mention the devil, whose name the editorial board of *RUDE PRAVO* printed five months before in pious indignation. Gottwald did indeed omit the devil's grandmother. But God be with her: for the sake of the united front we are ready to sacrifice her. Perhaps Gottwald would be prepared, for his part, to console the offended old dame by turning over to her disposal the article from *RUDE PRAVO* of February 27, together with the inkwell "worker correspondent".

Gottwald's political considerations, let us hope, are applicable not only to Czechoslovakia but also to Germany. And that is just how it should have been said. On the other hand, neither in Berlin nor in Prague can the party leadership confine itself to the bald declaration of its readiness for a united front with the social democracy, but must demonstrate this readiness in deeds, enterprisingly, in a Bolshevik manner, by means of quite definite practical proposals and actions. That is just what we demand.

Gottwald's article, thanks to the fact that it rings

with a realistic and not an ultimatum tone, instantly found an echo among the social democratic workers: On July 31 there appeared in RUDE PRAVO a letter, among others, from an unemployed printer who had recently returned from a visit to Germany. The letter bears the imprint of a worker-democrat who is undoubtedly afflicted with the prejudices of reformism. All the more important is it to pay attention to how the policy of the German Communist Party reflects itself in his consciousness. "When in the spring of last year," thus writes the printer, "comrade Breitscheid directed to the Communist party the appeal to begin joint actions with the social democracy, he evoked in the ROTE FAHNE a veritable storm of indignation. So the social democratic workers said to themselves: 'Now we know how serious are the intentions of the Communists on the united front'."

Here you have the genuine voice of a worker. Such a voice contributes more to the solution of the question than dozens of articles by unprincipled pen-pushers. As a matter of fact, Breitscheid did not propose any united front. He only frightened the bourgeoisie with the possibility of joint actions with the Communists. Had the Central Committee of the Communist party promptly put the question right on the edge of the knife, the social democratic party leadership would have been pushed into a difficult position. But the Central Committee of the Communist party hastened, as always, to put itself into a difficult position.

In the brochure *What Next?*, I happened to write on Breitscheid's speech: "Isn't it self-evident that Breitscheid's diplomatic and equivocal offer should have been grabbed with both hands; and that from one's own side, one should have submitted a concrete, carefully detailed and practical program for a joint

struggle against Fascism; and have demanded joint sessions of the executives of both parties, with the participation of the executives of the independent trade unions? Simultaneously, one should have carried this same program energetically down through all the layers of both parties and of the masses." (Page 56.)

By spurning the trial balloon of the reformist leaders, the Central Committee of the Communist party transformed in the minds of the workers the ambiguous assertion of Breitscheid into a direct united front proposal and prompted the social democratic workers to the conclusion: "*Our people* want joint actions, but the *Communists* are sabotaging." Can you imagine a more inappropriate and stupider policy? Could Breitscheid's maneuver be better supported? The letter from the Prague printer demonstrates with remarkable plainness that, with Thälmann's aid, Breitscheid completely attained his goal.

RUDE PRAVO endeavors to perceive contradiction and confusion in the fact that in one case we reject an agreement, but in another, we acknowledge it and deem it necessary to determine anew each time the scope, the slogans and the methods of the agreement. RUDE PRAVO does not understand that in politics, as in all other serious fields, one must know well: *what*, *when*, *where* and *how*. Also it cannot hurt to understand: *why*.

In our *Criticism of the Strategy of the Comintern* four years ago, we set down a few elementary rules for the united front policy. We consider it worth while to recall them here:

"The possibility of betrayal is always imbedded in reformism. That does not mean, of course, that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at every moment. Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists, if they take a step forward. But

to maintain a bloc with them when they commit treason shortly before the development of a movement, signifies a criminal carelessness towards the traitors and a veiling of betrayal." (*The Strategy of the World Revolution*, page 51.)

"The most important, best established and most unalterable rule of every manœuvre says: One's own party organization should never be diluted, united or combined with another, no matter how 'friendly' the latter may still be today. Such a step should never be undertaken which leads, directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination of the party to other parties or to organizations of other classes and therewith limits the freedom of one's own agitation, or a step through which one is made responsible, even if only in part, for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, not to speak of kneeling before another banner." (Ibid, pp. 60-61.)

Today, after the experience with the Barbusse Congress, we would add still another rule:

"Agreements should be reached only openly, before the eyes of the masses, from party to party, from organization to organization. You shall not avail yourself of equivocal middlemen. You shall not palm off diplomatic affairs with bourgeois pacifists as a proletarian united front."

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Class Struggle in the Light of the Economic Cycle

IF WE HAVE insistently demanded that a distinction be made between Fascism and Bonapartism, it has been in no wise out of theoretical pedantry. Names are used to distinguish between concepts; concepts, in politics, in turn serve to distinguish among real forces. The smashing of Fascism would leave no room for Bonapartism, and, it is to be hoped, would mean the direct introduction to the social revolution.

Only—the proletariat is not armed for the revolution. The reciprocal relations between Social Democracy and the Bonapartist government on the one hand, and between Bonapartism and Fascism on the other—while they do not decide the fundamental questions—distinguish by what roads and in what tempo the struggle between the proletariat and the Fascist counter-revolution will be prepared. The contradictions between Schleicher, Hitler and Wels, in the given situation, render more difficult the victory of Fascism, and open for the Communist party a new credit, the most valuable of all—a credit in time.

"Fascism will come to power by the cold method", we have heard more than once from the Stalinist theoreticians. This formula means that the Fascists will come to power legally, peacefully, through a coalition—without needing an open upheaval. Events have already refuted this prognosis. The Papen govern-

ment came to power through a coup d'Etat, and it complemented it with a coup d'Etat in Prussia. Even if we assume that a coalition between Nazis and Center would overthrow the Bonapartist Papen government with "constitutional" methods, in and of itself this still decides nothing. Between the "peaceful" assumption of power by Hitler and the establishment of the Fascist regime there still lies a long way. A coalition would only mean the facilitation of the coup d'Etat, but not replace it. Along with the final abolition of the Weimar constitution there would still remain the most important task—the abolition of the organs of proletarian democracy. From this point of view, what does the "cold method" mean? Nothing else than the lack of resistance on the part of the workers. Papen's Bonapartist coup d'Etat remained in fact unpunished. Will not Hitler's Fascist upheaval remain unpunished? It is precisely around this question that, consciously or unconsciously, the guessing about the "cold method" turns.

If the Communist party represented an overwhelming force, and if the proletariat were to march forward for the immediate seizure of power, all the contradictions in the camp of the possessing classes would temporarily be wiped out—Fascists, Bonapartists and democrats would stand in one front against the proletarian revolution. But this is not the case. The weaknesses of the Communist party and the splitting-up of the proletariat permit the possessing classes and the parties which serve them to carry their contradictions out into the open. Only by supporting itself on these contradictions will the Communist party be able to strengthen itself.

But perhaps Fascism in highly-industrialized Germany will altogether decide not to validate its claims for full power? Undoubtedly, the German proletar-

iat is incomparably more numerous and potentially stronger than the Italian. Although Fascism in Germany represents a more numerous and better-organized camp than Italy at the corresponding period, still the task of liquidating "Marxism" must appear both difficult and risky to the German Fascists. In addition, it is not excluded that Hitler's political peak has already been passed. The all-too-long period of waiting and the new barrier on its road in the shape of Bonapartism, undoubtedly weaken Fascism, intensify its internal frictions and might materially weaken its pressure. But here we enter a domain of tendencies which at the present moment cannot be calculated in advance. Only the living struggle can answer these questions. To build in advance on the assumption that national-socialism will inevitably stop half-way, would be most frivolous.

The theory of the "cold method", carried to its conclusion, is not in the least better than the theory of "social-Fascism"; more accurately, it only represents the obverse of that theory. The contradictions among the constituents of the enemy's camp are in both cases completely neglected, the successive stages of the process blurred. The Communist party is left completely on the side. Not for nothing was the theoretician of the "cold method", Hirsch, at the same time the theoretician of "social-Fascism".

The political crisis of the country develops on the foundation of the economic crisis. But economy too is not immovable. If yesterday we were obliged to say that the cyclical crisis only sharpens the fundamental, organic crisis of the capitalist system, so today we must recall that the general decline of capitalism does not exclude cyclical fluctuations. The present crisis will not last forever. The hopes of the capitalist world for a turn in the crisis are exaggerated.

gerated to the utmost, but not groundless. The question of the struggle of political forces must be incorporated into the economic perspectives. Papen's program makes it all the more impossible to postpone this, since it itself starts from the assumption of an approaching economic improvement.

The industrial revival steps on the scene for everyone to see as soon as it expresses itself in the form of growing turnover of goods, rising production, increased number of employed workers. But it does not begin in that way. The revival is preceded by preparatory processes in the field of money circulation and of credit. The capital invested in unprofitable undertakings and branches of industry must be released and receive the form of liquid money which seeks investment. The market, freed of its fatty deposits, growths and swellings, must show a real demand. The entrepreneurs must gain "confidence" in the market and in each other. On the other hand, the "confidence" of which the world press speaks so much must be spurred on, not only by economic, but also by political factors (reparations, war debts, disarmament—rearmament, etc.).

A rise in the turnover of goods, in production, in the number of employed workers, is nowhere to be seen as yet; on the contrary, the decline continues. As to the processes preparatory to a turn in the crisis, they have obviously fulfilled the greater part of the tasks assigned to them. Many signs really permit us to assume that the moment of turn in the economic circle has approached, if it is not immediately before us. That is the estimation, seen on a world scale.

But we must draw a distinction between the creditor countries (the United States, England, France) and the debtor countries, or more accurately, the bankrupt countries; the first place in the latter group is

occupied by Germany. Germany has no liquid capital. Its economy can receive an impetus only through an influx of capital from outside. But a country which is not in condition to pay its old debts receives no loans. In any case, before the creditors open their money-bags they must be convinced that Germany is again in condition to export a greater amount than it needs to import; the difference has to serve to cover the debts. The demand for German goods is to be expected primarily from the agrarian countries, in the first instance from South Europe. The agrarian countries, for their part, depend on the demand of the industrial countries for raw materials and food-stuffs. Germany will therefore be forced to wait; the stream of life will first have to flow through the series of its capitalist competitors and its agrarian counterparts before it affects Germany's own economic performance.

But the German bourgeoisie cannot wait. Still less can the Bonapartist clique wait. While it promises not to touch the stability of the currency, the Papen government is introducing a material inflation. Together with speeches on the rebirth of economic liberalism, it assumes the administrative disposition over the economic cycle; in the name of the freedom of private initiative it subordinates the taxpayers immediately to the capitalist private entrepreneurs.

The axis around which the government program turns is the hope of a nearby turn in the crisis. If this does not take place soon, the two billions* will evaporate like two drops of water on a red-hot stove. Papen's plan has immeasurably more of a gambling, speculative character than the bullish movement which

*The number of marks in tax certificates given to capitalists as a bonus under the Papen program. (Trans.)

is currently taking place on the New York Stock Exchange. In any case, the consequences of a collapse of the Bonapartist gamble will be far more catastrophic.

The most immediate and tangible result of the gap between the plans of the government and the actual movement of the market will consist in the slipping of the mark. The social evils, increased by inflation, will assume an intolerable character. The bankruptcy of the Papen economic program will demand its replacement by another and more effective program. Which one? Obviously by the program of Fascism. Once the attempt has failed to force the recovery through Bonapartist therapy, it must be tried with Fascist surgery. Social Democracy in the meantime will make "left" gestures and fall to pieces. The Communist party, if it does not put obstacles in its own way, will grow. All in all, this will mean a revolutionary situation. The question of the prospects of victory under these circumstances consists to the extent of three-quarters of the question of Communist strategy.

But the revolutionary party must also be prepared for another perspective, for that of a quicker appearance of a turn in the crisis. Let us assume that the Schleicher-Papen government were to succeed in maintaining itself until the beginning of a revival in commerce and industry. Would it be saved thereby? No, the beginning of an upward movement in business would mean the certain end of Bonapartism and might even mean more.

The forces of the German proletariat are not exhausted. But they have been undermined—by sacrifices, defeats, disappointments, beginning with 1914; by the systematic betrayals of the Social Democracy, by the discredit which the Communist party has

thrown upon itself. Six or seven million unemployed hang like a heavy load on the feet of the proletariat. The emergency decrees of Bruening and Papen have found no resistance. The coup d'Etat of July 20 has remained unpunished.

We can predict with full assurance that an upward turn in the cycle would give a powerful impetus to the activity of the proletariat, at present in decline. At the moment when the factory stops discharging workers and takes on new ones, the self-confidence of the workers is strengthened; they are once again necessary. The compressed spirals begin to straighten out again. Workers always enter into the struggle for the reconquest of lost positions more easily than for the conquest of new ones. Neither emergency decrees nor the use of the Reichswehr will be able to liquidate mass strikes which develop on the wave of the upturn. The Bonapartist regime, which is able to maintain itself only through the "social truce", will be the first victim of the upturn in the cycle.

A growth of strike struggles is already to be observed in various countries (Belgium, England, Poland, in part in the United States, but not Germany). An evaluation of the mass strikes now developing, in the light of the world-wide economic cycle, is not an easy task. The statistics disclose fluctuations in the business cycle with unavoidable delay. The revival must become a fact before it can be registered. The workers usually sense the revival of economic life earlier than the statisticians. New orders or even the expectation of new orders, reorganization of enterprises for expansion of production or at least the interruption of the discharge of workers, immediately increase the powers of resistance and the demands of the workers. The defensive strike of the textile workers in Lancashire was unquestionably called forth by a certain up-

turn in the textile industry. As to the Belgian strike, it is obviously taking place on the basis of the still deepening crisis of the coal mining industry. The transitional and turning-point character of the present section of the world economic cycle corresponds to the variety of the economic impulses which are the basis of the most recent strikes. But in general the growth of the mass movement rather tends to indicate an upward turn which is about to become perceptible. In any case, a real revival of economic activity, even in its first stages, will call forth a broad upswing in the mass struggle.

The ruling classes of all countries expect miracles from the industrial upswing; the speculation in stocks which has already broken out is a proof of this. If capitalism were really to enter upon the phase of a new prosperity or even of a gradual but persistent rise, this would naturally involve the stabilization of capitalism and at the same time a strengthening of reformism. But there is not the least ground for the hope or fear that the economic revival, which in and of itself is inevitable, will be able to overcome the general tendencies of decay in world economy and in European economy in particular. If pre-war capitalism developed under the formula of expanded production of goods, present-day capitalism, with all its cyclical fluctuations, represents an expanded production of misery and of catastrophes. The new economic cycle will execute the inevitable readjustment of forces within the individual countries as well as within the capitalist camp as a whole, predominantly toward America and away from Europe. But within a very short time it will place the capitalist world before insoluble contradictions and condemn it to new and still more frightful convulsions.

Without the risk of error, we can set up the follow-

ing prediction—the economic revival will suffice to strengthen the self-confidence of the workers and give a new impetus to their struggle, but it will in no way suffice to give capitalism, and particularly European capitalism, the possibility of rebirth.

The practical conquests which the new cyclical upturn in declining capitalism will open to the workers' movement will necessarily bear a most limited character. Will German capitalism, at the height of the new revival in economic activity, be able to restore those conditions for the working class which existed before the present crisis? Everything compels us to answer this question in advance with, "No". All the more quickly will the awakened mass movement have to strike out along the road of politics.

Even the very first step of the industrial revival will be most dangerous for Social Democracy. The workers will throw themselves into struggle to win back what they have lost. The leaders of Social Democracy will again base their hopes on the restoration of the "normal" order. Their main consideration will be the restoration of their fitness to join a coalition government. Leaders and masses will pull in opposite directions. In order to exploit to the limit the new crisis of reformism, the Communists need a correct orientation in the cyclical changes and the preparation sufficiently ahead of time of a practical program of action, beginning first of all with the losses suffered by the workers during the years of crisis. The transition from economic struggles to political ones will constitute an especially suitable moment for the strengthening of the power and influence of the revolutionary proletarian party.

But success in this field as in others can be achieved only under one condition—the correct application of the policy of the united front. For the Communist

party of Germany this means, above all—an end of the present policy of sitting between two stools in the trade union field, a firm course toward the free trade unions, the drawing of the present cadres of the R. T. U. O. into the composition of the free trade unions, the opening of a systematic struggle for influence on the shop councils by means of the trade unions, and the preparation of a broad campaign under the slogan of workers' control of production.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Road to Socialism

KAUTSKY and Hilferding, among others, have declared more than once in recent years that they never shared the theory of the collapse of capitalism which the revisionists once ascribed to the Marxists and which the Kautskyans themselves now frequently attribute to the Communists.

The Bernsteinians outlined two perspectives: one, unreal, allegedly orthodox-“Marxian”, according to which, in the long run, under the influence of the internal antagonisms of capitalism its mechanical collapse was supposed to take place; and a second, “realistic”, according to which a gradual evolution from capitalism to socialism was to be accomplished. Antithetical as these two schemas may be at first glance, they are nevertheless united by a common trait: the absence of the revolutionary factor. While they disavowed the caricature of the automatic collapse of capitalism attributed to them, the Marxists demonstrated that under the influence of the sharpening class struggle, the proletariat would carry through the revolution much sooner than the objective contradictions of capitalism could lead to its automatic collapse.

This dispute was carried on as long ago as the end of the past century. It must however be acknowledged that the capitalist reality since the war, approached, in a certain respect, much closer to the Bernsteinian caricature of Marxism than anyone might ever have

assumed, above all—the revisionists themselves: for they had only portrayed the spectre of the collapse in order to bring out its unreality. Nevertheless, capitalism proves in actuality to be closer to automatic decay the more delayed is the revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in the destiny of society.

The most important component part of the theory of collapse was the theory of pauperization. The Marxists contended with a certain caution that the sharpening of the social antagonisms need not necessarily be equivalent to an absolute sinking of the standard of living of the masses. In reality, it is this latter process which is experiencing its unfolding. Wherein could the collapse of capitalism express itself more acutely than in chronic unemployment and the destruction of social insurance, that is, in the refusal of the social order to feed its own slaves?

The opportunistic brakes in the working class have proved to be powerful enough to grant the elementary forces of outlived capitalism additional decades of life. As a result, it was not the idyl of the peaceful transformation of capitalism into socialism which took place, but a state of affairs infinitely closer to social decay.

The reformists sought for a long time to shift the responsibility for the present state of society upon the shoulders of the war. But in the first place, the war did not create the destructive tendencies of capitalism, but only brought them to the surface and accelerated them; secondly, the war would have been unable to accomplish its work of destruction without the political support of reformism; thirdly, the hopeless contradictions of capitalism are preparing new wars from various sides. Reformism will be unable to shift the historical responsibility from itself. By paralyzing and curbing the revolutionary energy of the proletar-

iat, the international social democracy invests the process of the capitalist collapse with the blindest, unruliest, most catastrophic and bloodiest forms.

Of course, one may speak only conditionally of a realization of the revisionist caricature of Marxism, applicable to a definite historical period. The way out of decaying capitalism, however, will be found, even if after a great delay, not upon the road of the automatic collapse but upon the revolutionary road.

The present crisis has swept aside with a final flourish of the broom the remnants of the reformist utopias. Opportunist practice at the present time possesses no theoretical covering whatsoever. For in the long run it is pretty much a matter of indifference to Wels, Hilferding, Grzesinski and Noske as to the number of catastrophes that will still hurtle down upon the heads of the masses of the people, if only their own interests remain immune. Only, the point is that the crisis of the bourgeois régime strikes at the reformist leaders, too.

"Act, state, act!" the social democracy still cried a short while ago, as it fell back before Fascism. And the state acted: Otto Braun and Severing were kicked into the street.—Now, wrote the VORWAERTS, everybody must recognize the advantages of democracy over the régime of dictatorship.—Yes, democracy has substantial advantages, reflected Grzesinski while he made the acquaintance of prison from the inside.

From this experience resulted the conclusion: "It is time to proceed to socialization!" Tarnow, yesterday still a doctor of capitalism, suddenly decided to become its grave-digger. Now, when capitalism has turned the reformist ministers, police chiefs and lord lieutenants into unemployed, it has manifestly exhausted itself. Wels writes a programmatic article, "The hour of socialism has struck!" There only remains for

Schleicher to rob the deputies of their salary and the former ministers of their pension—and Hilferding will write a study on the historic rôle of the general strike.

The "Left" turn of the social democratic leaders startles one with its stupidity and deceitfulness. This by no means signifies, however, that the manœuvre is condemned in advance to failure. This party, laden with crimes, still stands at the head of millions. It will not fall of its own accord. One must know how to overthrow it.

The Communist party will declare that the Wels-Tarnow course towards socialism is a new form of mass deception, and that will be correct. It will relate the history of the social democratic "socializations" of the last fourteen years. That will be useful. But it is insufficient: history, even the most recent, cannot take the place of active politics.

Tarnow seeks to reduce the question of the revolutionary or the reformist road to socialism to the simple question of the "tempo" of the transformations. Deeper a theoretician cannot sink. The tempo of the socialist transformations depends in reality upon the state of the productive forces of the country, its culture, the extent of the overhead imposed upon it for defense, etc. But socialist transformations, the speedy as well as the slow, are possible only if at the summits of society stands a class interested in socialism, and at the head of this class a party which does not dupe the exploited, and which is always ready to suppress the resistance of the exploiters. We must explain to the workers that precisely in that consists the régime of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*.

Only, even this does not suffice. Once it is a question of the burning problems of the world proletariat, one should not—as the Comintern does—forget the fact of the existence of the Soviet Union. With re-

gard to Germany, the task today does not lie in commencing a socialist construction for the first time, but in tying together Germany's productive forces, its culture, its technical and organizational genius with the socialist construction already in process in the Soviet Union.

The German Communist Party confines itself to the mere eulogizing of the Soviet successes, and in this connection commits gross and dangerous exaggerations. But it is completely incapable of linking together the socialist construction in the U. S. S. R., its enormous experiences and valuable achievements, with the tasks of the proletarian revolution in Germany. The Stalinist bureaucracy, on its part, is least of all in a position to render the German Communist Party any assistance in this highly important question: its perspectives are limited to one single country.

The incoherent and cowardly state capitalistic projects of the social democracy must be countered with *a general plan for the joint socialist construction of the U. S. S. R. and Germany*. Nobody demands that a detailed plan should be worked out instantly. A preliminary rough draft suffices. Foundation pillars are necessary. This plan must as speedily as possible be made the object of action by every organization of the German working class, primarily of its trade unions.

Into this action must be drawn the progressive forces among the German technicians, statisticians and economists. The discussions about planned economy so widespread in Germany, reflecting the hopelessness of German capitalism, remain purely academic, bureaucratic, lifeless-pedantic. The Communist vanguard alone is capable of drawing the treatment of the question out of the charmed circle.

The socialist construction is already in progress—to this work a bridge must be thrown over the state

frontiers. Here is the first plan: study it, improve it, make it concrete! Workers, elect special planning commissions, charge them with entering into contact with the trade unions and economic organs of the Soviets. On the basis of the German trade unions, the factory councils and other labor organizations, create a central planning commission which has the job of entering into contact with the Gosplan of the U. S. S. R. Draw into this work German engineers, organizers, economists!

This is the only correct preliminary to the question of planned economy, today, in the year 1932, after fifteen years of the existence of the Soviets, after fourteen years of convulsions of the German capitalist republic.

Nothing is easier than to ridicule the social democratic bureaucracy, beginning with Wels, who has struck up a Song of Solomon to socialism. Yet, it must not be forgotten that the reformist workers have a thoroughly serious attitude to the question of socialism. One must have a serious attitude to the reformist workers. Here the problem of the united front rises up once again in its full scope.

If the social democracy sets itself the task (in words: *we know that!*), not to save capitalism but to build up socialism, then it must seek an agreement not with the Center but with the Communists. Will the Communist party reject such an agreement? By no means. On the contrary, it will itself propose such an agreement, demand it before the masses as a redemption of the just-signed Socialist promissory note.

The attack of the Communist party upon the social democracy must proceed at the present time along three lines. The task of demolishing Fascism retains all its acuteness. The decisive battle of the proletariat against Fascism will signify simultaneously the

collision with the Bonapartist state apparatus. This makes the *general strike* an indispensable fighting weapon. It must be prepared. A special general strike plan must be worked out, that is, a plan for the mobilization of the forces to carry it out. Proceeding from this plan, to unfold a mass campaign. On the basis of this campaign, to propose to the social democracy an agreement for the carrying out of the general strike under definite political conditions. Repeated and made concrete at every new stage, this proposal will lead in the process of its development to the creation of the *Soviets as the highest organs of the united front*.

That Papen's economic plan, which has now become law, brings the German proletariat unprecedented poverty, is recognized in words also by the leaders of the social democracy and the trade unions. In the press, they express themselves with a vehemence they have not voiced for a long time. Between their words and their deeds lies an abyss, *we know that well*,—but we must understand how to pin them down to their word. *A system of joint measures of struggle against the régime of emergency decrees and Bonapartism must be elaborated.* This struggle imposed upon the proletariat by the whole situation cannot, by its very nature, be conducted within the framework of democracy. A situation where Hitler possesses an army of 400,000 men, Papen-Schleicher, besides the Reichswehr, the semi-private Stahlhelm army of 200,000 men, the bourgeois democracy the half-tolerated Reichsbanner army, the Communist party the proscribed Red Front army—such a situation by itself lays bare the problem of the state as a problem of power. A better revolutionary school cannot be imagined!

The Communist party must say to the working class: Schleicher is not to be overthrown by any par-

liamentary game. If the social democracy wants to set to work to overthrow the Bonapartist government with other means, the Communist party is ready to aid the social democracy with all its strength. At the same time, the Communists obligate themselves in advance to use no violent methods against a social democratic government insofar as the latter bases itself upon the majority of the working class and insofar as it guarantees the Communist party the freedom of agitation and organization. Such a way of putting the question will be comprehensible to every social democratic and non-party worker.

The third line, finally, is the *fight for socialism*. Here too the iron must be forged while it is hot and the social democracy pressed to the wall with a concrete plan of collaboration with the U. S. S. R. What is necessary on this point has already been said above.

Naturally, these sectors of struggle, which are of varying significance in the complete strategical perspective, are not separated from each other, but rather overlap and merge. The political crisis of society demands the combining of the partial questions with the general questions: precisely therein lies the essence of the revolutionary situation.

CHAPTER NINE

The Only Road

CAN it be expected that the Central Committee of the Communist party will independently accomplish a turn to the right road? Its whole past demonstrates that it is incapable of doing this.

Hardly had it begun to rectify itself than the apparatus saw before it the perspective of "Trotskyism". If Thälmann himself did not grasp it immediately, then he was told from Moscow that the "part" must be sacrificed for the sake of the "whole", that is, the interests of the German revolution for the sake of the interests of the Stalinist apparatus. The abashed attempts to revise the policy were once more withdrawn. The bureaucratic reaction triumphed again all along the line.

It is not, of course, a matter of Thälmann. Were the present-day Comintern to give its sections the possibility of living, of thinking and of developing themselves they would long ago, in the last fifteen years, have been able to select their own leading cadres. But the bureaucracy erected instead a system of appointed leaders and their support by means of artificial ballyhoo. Thälmann is a product of this system and at the same time its victim.

The cadres, paralyzed in their development, weaken the party. They supplement their inadequacy with repressions. The vacillations and the uncertainty of

the party are inexorably transmitted to the class as a whole. The masses cannot be summoned to bold actions when the party itself is robbed of revolutionary determination.

Even if Thälmann were to receive tomorrow a telegram from Manuilsky on the necessity of a turn to the path of the united front policy, the new zig-zag at the top would bring little good. The leadership is too compromised. A correct policy demands a healthy régime. Party democracy, at present a plaything of the bureaucracy, must rise again as a reality. The party must become a party, then the masses will believe it. Practically, this means to put upon the order of the day: *an extraordinary party convention* and an *extraordinary congress of the Comintern*.

The party convention must naturally be preceded by an all-sided discussion. All apparatus barriers must be razed. Every party organization, every nucleus has the right to call to its meetings and listen to every Communist, member of the party or expelled from it, if it considers this necessary for the working out of its opinion. The press must be put at the service of the discussion; adequate space must be allotted daily for critical articles in every party paper. Special press commissions, elected at mass meetings of the party members, must see to it that the papers serve the party and not the bureaucracy.

The discussion, it is true, will require no little time and energy. The apparatus will argue: how can the party permit itself the "luxury of discussion" at such a critical period? The bureaucratic saviors believe that under difficult conditions the party must shut up. The Marxists, on the contrary, believe that the more difficult the situation, the more important the independent rôle of the party.

The leadership of the Bolshevik party enjoyed, in

1917, a very great esteem. And notwithstanding this, a series of deep-going party discussions took place throughout the year 1917. On the eve of the October overturn, the whole party debated passionately which of the two sections of the Central Committee was right: the majority, which was for the uprising, or the minority, which was against the uprising. Expulsions, and repressions in general, were nowhere to be seen, in spite of the profundity of the differences of opinion. Into these discussions were drawn the non-party masses. In Petrograd, a meeting of non-party working women dispatched a delegation to the Central Committee in order to support the majority in it. To be sure, the discussion required time. But in return for that, there grew out of the open discussion, without threats, lies and falsifications, the general, indomitable certainty of the correctness of the policy, that is, that which alone makes possible the victory.

What course will things take in Germany? Will the small wheel of the Opposition succeed in turning the large party wheel in time? That is how the question stands now. Pessimistic voices are often raised. In the various Communist groupings, in the party itself, as well as its periphery, there are not a few elements who say to themselves: in every important question the Left Opposition has a correct stand. But it is weak. Its cadres are small in number and politically inexperienced. Can such an organization, with a small weekly paper (*DIE PERMANENTE REVOLUTION*) successfully counterpose itself to the mighty Comintern machine?

The lessons of events are stronger than the Stalinist bureaucracy. We want to be the interpreters of these lessons to the Communist masses. Therein lies our historic rôle as a faction. We do not demand, as do Seydewitz and Co., that the revolutionary proletariat should believe us on credit. We allot ourselves

a more modest rôle: we propose our assistance to the Communist vanguard in the elaboration of the correct line. For this work we are gathering and training our own cadres. This stage of preparation may not be jumped over. Every new stage of struggle will push to our side those in the proletariat who reflect the most and are most critical.

The revolutionary party begins with an idea, a program, which is aimed against the most powerful apparatus of class society. It is not the cadre that creates the idea, but the idea that creates the cadre. Fear of the power of the apparatus is one of the most conspicuous features of that specific opportunism which the Stalinist bureaucracy cultivates. Marxian criticism is stronger than any and every apparatus.

The organizational forms which the further evolution of the Left Opposition will assume, depend upon many circumstances: the momentum of the historical blows, the degree of resisting power of the Stalin bureaucracy, the activity of the rank and file Communists, the energy of the Opposition itself. But the principles and methods we fight for have been tested by the greatest events in world history, by the victories as well as by the defeats. They will make their way.

The successes of the Opposition in every country, Germany included, are indisputable and manifest. But they are developing slower than many of us expected. We may regret this, but we need not be surprised at it. Every Communist who begins to listen to the Left Opposition is cynically given the choice by the bureaucracy: either go along with the baiting of "Trotskyism" or else be kicked out of the ranks of the Comintern. For the party official, it is a question of position and wages: the Stalinist apparatus plays this key to perfection. But immeasurably more important are the thousands of rank and file Communists who are torn

between their devotion to the ideas of Communism and the threatened expulsion from the ranks of the Comintern. That is why there are in the ranks of the official Communist party a great number of partial, intimidated or concealed Oppositionists.

This extraordinary combination of historical conditions sufficiently explains the slow organizational growth of the Left Opposition. At the same time, in spite of this slowness, the spiritual life of the Comintern revolves, today more than ever before, around the struggle against "Trotskyism". The theoretical periodicals and theoretical newspaper articles of the C. P. S. U., as well as the other sections of the Comintern, are chiefly devoted to the struggle against the Left Opposition, now openly, now maskedly. Still more symptomatic in significance is that mad organizational baiting which the apparatus pursues against the Opposition: disruption of its meetings by blackjack methods; employment of all sorts of other physical violence: behind-the-scene agreements with bourgeois pacifists, French Radicals and Freemasons against the "Trotskyists"; the dissemination of envenomed calumnies from the Stalinist center, etc., etc.

The Stalinists perceive much more directly and know better than the Oppositionists to what extent our ideas are undermining the pillars of their apparatus. The methods of self-defense of the Stalinist faction, however, have a double-edged character. Up to a certain moment, they have an intimidating effect. But at the same time they prepare a mass reaction against the system of falsity and violence.

When, in July 1917, the government of the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionists branded the Bolsheviks as agents of the German General Staff, this despicable measure succeeded at first in exercising a strong influence upon the soldiers, the peasants and

the backward strata of the workers. But when all the further events clearly confirmed how right the Bolsheviks had been, the masses begun to say to themselves: so they deliberately slandered the Leninists, they basely incited against them, only because they were right? And the feeling of suspicion against the Bolsheviks was converted into a feeling of warm devotion and love for them. Although under different conditions, this very complex process is taking place now too. By means of a monstrous accumulation of calumnies and repressions, the Stalinist bureaucracy has undeniably succeeded for a period of time in intimidating the rank and file party members; at the same time, it is preparing for the Bolshevik-Leninists an enormous rehabilitation in the eyes of the revolutionary masses. At the present time, there can no longer be the slightest doubt on this score.

Yes, today we are still weak. The Communist party still has masses, but already it has neither doctrine nor strategic orientation. The Left Opposition has already worked out its Marxian orientation, but as yet it has no masses. The remaining groups of the "Left" camp possess neither the one nor the other. Hopelessly the Leninbund pines away, thinking to substitute the individual fantasies and whims of Urbahns for a serious principled policy. The Brandlerists, in spite of their apparatus cadre, are descending step by step; small tactical recipes cannot replace a revolutionary-strategical position. The S. A. P. has put up its candidacy for the revolutionary leadership of the proletariat. Baseless pretension! Even the most serious representatives of this "party" do not overstep, as Fritz Sternberg's latest book shows, the barriers of Left-Centrism. The more assiduously they seek to create an "independent" doctrine, the more they reveal themselves to be disciples of Thalheimer. But this school is as hopeless as a corpse.

A new historical party cannot arise simply because a number of old social democrats have convinced themselves, very belatedly, of the counter-revolutionary character of the Ebert-Wels policy. A new party can just as little be improvised by a group of Communists who have as yet done nothing to warrant their claim to proletarian leadership. For a new party to arise, it is on the one hand necessary to have great historical events, which would break the backbone of the old parties, and on the other hand, a position in principle worked out, and cadres tested, in the experience of events.

While we are fighting with all our strength for the rebirth of the Comintern and the continuity of its further development, we are least of all inclined to any fetishism of form. The fate of the proletarian world revolution stands, for us, above the organizational fate of the Comintern. Should the worst variant materialize; should the present official parties, despite all our efforts, be led to a collapse by the Stalinist bureaucracy; should it mean in a certain sense to begin all over again, then the new International will trace its genealogy from the ideas and cadres of the Communist Left Opposition.

And that is why the short-term criteria of "pessimism" and "optimism" are not applicable to the work which we are carrying through. It stands above the separate stages, the partial defeats and victories. Our policy is a policy of long range.

Afterword

THE present brochure, whose different parts were written at different times, had already been finished when a telegram from Berlin brought the news of the conflict of the overwhelming majority of the Reichstag with the Papen government and consequently with the Reich President. We expect to follow the concrete development of subsequent events in the columns of the *Permanente Revolution*. Here we wish only to emphasize some general conclusions, which seemed to be open to criticism when we began the brochure and which thanks to the testimony of facts, have since become incontestable.

1. The *Bonapartist* character of the Schleicher-Papen government has been completely disclosed by its isolated position in the Reichstag. The agrarian-capitalist circles which stand directly behind the presidential government constitute an incomparably smaller percentage of the German nation than the percentage of votes given for Papen in the Reichstag.

2. The antagonism between Papen and Hitler is the antagonism between the agrarian-capitalist leadership and the reactionary petty bourgeoisie. Just as once the liberal bourgeoisie used the revolutionary movement of the petty bourgeoisie, but employed every means to keep it from seizing the power, so the monopolistic bourgeoisie is prepared to reward Hitler as its lackey, but not as its master. Without compelling necessity it will not turn over the full power to Fascism.

3. The fact that the various fractions of the grand, middle and petty bourgeoisie are carrying on an open struggle for power, without avoiding a most dangerous conflict, proves that the bourgeoisie does not see itself

as being immediately threatened by the proletariat. Not only the national-socialists and the Center, but also the leaders of the Social-Democracy have dared enter on a *struggle for the constitution* only in the firm confidence that it will not change into a *revolutionary struggle*.

4. The only party whose vote against Papen was dictated by revolutionary purposes is the *Communist party*. But it is a long way from revolutionary purposes to revolutionary achievements.

5. The logic of events is such that the struggle for "parliament" and for "democracy" becomes for every social-democratic worker a question of *power*. Therein lies the main content of the whole conflict from the standpoint of the revolution. The question of power is the question of the revolutionary unity in action of the proletariat. The policy of the united front toward the Social Democracy must be prepared in the very near future to render possible, on the basis of proletarian democratic representation, the creation of class organs of struggle, i. e., of *workers' soviets*.

6. In view of the gifts to capitalists and the monstrous attack on the standard of living of the proletariat, the Communist party must set up the slogan of *workers' control of production*.

7. The fractions of the possessing classes can afford to quarrel among themselves only because the revolutionary Party is weak. The revolutionary party could become immeasurably stronger if it would correctly exploit the quarrels among the possessing classes. For this it is necessary to know how to distinguish the various fractions according to their social composition, but not to throw them all into one heap. The theory of "social Fascism", which has completely and finally been bankrupted, must at last be thrown out as worthless junk.

Prinkipa, September 14, 1932.

—L. TROTSKY.

Other Works By
LEON TROTSKY

**Problems of the Development of the
U. S. S. R. .15**

Postage: One cent extra per copy.

Strategy of the World Revolution .25

Postage: One cent extra per copy.

The Permanent Revolution

180 pages cloth 1.00
 paper .50

Postage: Six cents extra per copy.

Problems of the Chinese Revolution

450 pages cloth 1.50
 paper 1.00

Postage: 10 cents extra per copy.

Communism and Syndicalism .15

Postage: One cent extra per copy.

The Spanish Revolution in Danger .15

Postage: One cent extra per copy.

PIONEER PUBLISHERS
84 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y.

Pioneer Publishing Fund

In the four and a half years of its existence the Communist League of America (Opposition) has brought out fifteen of the contemporary works of Leon Trotsky of which this pamphlet is one, and one work by a member of the League. These constitute a priceless addition to the literature of Marxism and will become the texts by which the future cadres of the revolutionary movement will be educated.

The publication of this pamphlet and the works we have projected was and will be made possible through the operation of the Publishing Fund. This is a fund which is raised by Pioneer Publishers for the sole purpose of bringing out these works. The fund is made up of donations and short-and-long-term loans. All the funds raised by this means are used exclusively for the publishing work, and are repaid out of the sale of the pamphlets. A strict account of all funds received and expended is kept and rendered.

All readers of this pamphlet who are seriously interested in the Marxist education of the revolutionary vanguard and the working class are urged to make donations to this fund. Readers who are in a position to make loans to the fund are asked to write to

PIONEER PUBLISHERS
84 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y.

Workers' Pocket Series

By **LEON TROTSKY**

In Defense of the Russian Revolution

Full text of the speech delivered to the
socialist students in Copenhagen

48 pages

5 cents

Soviet Economy In Danger

A penetrating analysis of the situation on
the eve of the second five year plan.

72 pages

10 cents

Unemployment and the American Working Class

by Arne Swabeck

A Marxian analysis for workers

24 pages

5 cents

The Left Opposition of the Comintern

by *Max Shachtman*

A popular explanation of the origin of the
International Left Opposition and
what it stands for.

72 pages

10 cents

Postage: One cent extra per copy.

PIONEER PUBLISHERS

84 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y.